

October 25, 2007

**THE
CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION**
OF THE UNITED STATES

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association, the national leadership organization of more than 2,000 Catholic health care sponsors, systems, hospitals, facilities, and related organizations, I am writing to express our full support for the recently revised compromise legislation to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), H.R. 3963.



We in the Catholic health ministry consider access to adequate health care to be a basic human right, necessary for the development and maintenance of life and for the ability of human beings to realize the fullness of their dignity. Catholic health care organizations have a long tradition of supporting affordable and accessible health care for all, particularly such vulnerable members of our society as children. We firmly believe that there is no reason why any child in our nation should go without access to health care, a basic right that is critically important to the well-being and development of children.

We believe the compromise legislation is a decisive step toward this goal. In particular, we are pleased that the bill would extend the program for five years and raise funding levels to allow states to sustain existing children's enrollment and to extend coverage to approximately four million more low-income uninsured children. The bill also retains certain priorities contained in previous reauthorization legislation such as incentives and tools for states to assist uninsured children eligible for Medicaid and SCHIP to enroll, ensuring that this bill indeed puts "poor children first." The bill clarifies as well the fact that undocumented immigrants remain ineligible for SCHIP.

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In addition, we would note that the provisions in this legislation capping federal eligibility waivers at 300 percent of the federal poverty level and phasing out coverage of adults should address concerns raised in the past regarding the role of SCHIP in providing coverage for those who need it most. We believe these clarifications and changes make the legislation worthy of support from a broad and bipartisan range of members of Congress.

We have a great opportunity to make a profound difference in the lives of our nation's children by extending health coverage for them with this compromise legislation, and we urge you to support it. If I can be of any further assistance on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "S".

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO