



FIRST FOCUS

CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

June 11, 2014

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller, IV
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rockefeller:

I am writing on behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan advocacy organization committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, to thank you for your leadership in introducing the Children's Health Insurance Program Extension Act. We applaud your longstanding commitment to our nation's children and offer our support for this legislation, which will extend the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for four years, protecting coverage for the millions of children who currently rely on CHIP for their health care.

As you know, CHIP is a vital program for our nation's low-income children who are in families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to be able to afford private health insurance coverage on their own. Since 1997, the number of uninsured children has been cut in half because of CHIP and Medicaid. Indeed, no government program has been more successful in expanding children's health coverage.

Without a CHIP funding extension, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the 12.7 million children enrolled in CHIP in FY 2015 are at risk of losing their CHIP coverage in 2016. And millions of these children who lose CHIP would have no other coverage option to turn to. The uninsurance rates for children would increase in every state. The impact would be devastating for the 8 million children in working families who rely on CHIP for their health care. This legislation to secure CHIP's future is urgent if states are to continue to operate their programs without interruption. We are committed to working with you to secure congressional action as soon as possible.

While we are most grateful for the language in your bill that extends CHIP funding for four years, we also appreciate the enrollment simplification and improvement provision that makes the Express Lane Enrollment option for states permanent. Express Lane Enrollment was first adopted as part of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) in 2009 and since that time it has been working effectively in the states that have taken up this option to reduce the bureaucratic barriers that hinder the enrollment of eligible but uninsured children into coverage. We also applaud the inclusion of additional outreach and enrollment grant funding that would support community-based efforts to enroll eligible low-income children. These provisions, among many others, will certainly improve health care access and outcomes for our nation's most precious resource, our children.

Once again, we are grateful for your commitment to protecting the health of our nation's children and we thank you for taking the lead to make sure that CHIP continues into the future. We look forward to working with you to secure its enactment this year.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley
President
First Focus Campaign for Children