



FIRST FOCUS

CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

November 21, 2013

The Honorable Diana DeGette
United States House of Representatives
2335 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative DeGette:

I am writing on behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children (FFCC) to thank you for your leadership in introducing the Start Healthy Act of 2013. FFCC is a bipartisan organization that advocates directly for legislative change in Congress to ensure that children, youth, and families are a priority in federal policy and budget decisions.

As an organization that focuses on policy issues from birth to the transition to adulthood, FFCC recognizes the importance for children of having health insurance in the early stages of life. The first year is essential to begin a child's healthy physical and mental development, and a key component of this is access to adequate medical care, developmental screenings, and periodic checkups. Medicaid for newborns under the Start Healthy Act will assure that children have this access to care, preventing the adverse health implications that can result when a child is unable to get the care they need.

By deeming newborns with no other insurance as qualified for Medicaid, the Start Healthy Act ensures that children get the checkups and medical care necessary for a healthy start in life. The children affected by this legislation come largely from low-income families and even simple care like well-child visits would be out of reach without insurance. Furthermore, by keeping children qualified for Medicaid until they are enrolled in a different insurance plan, the Start Healthy Act makes sure that children experience no lapse in coverage. While it is important for all people to have consistent health insurance coverage, it is especially important for young children. Any lack of coverage would mean missed checkups and a lack of medical care during the most important stages of development.

Additionally, automatically enrolling children at birth means children do not go even a day without insurance. While insurance coverage for children has recently improved in this country, this legislation is an important step toward covering those who are still uninsured and will serve as a safety net for our youngest and most vulnerable children.

Thank you for introducing this important piece of legislation and for all of your efforts to improve health coverage for children. We look forward to working with you and your staff on this important issue. If you have any further questions or comments, please contact Lisa Shapiro, Vice President for Health Policy, at LisaS@firstfocus.net.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley
President