

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Susan Wild
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Wild and Fitzpatrick:

I am writing from First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal budget and policy decisions, in support of H.R. 6797, the Children's Health Insurance Program Pandemic Enhancement and Relief (CHIPPER) Act.

In the midst of COVID-19 and the economic recession crises, which are unprecedented, we strongly support this legislation to suspend the scheduled drop in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) E-FMAP of 11.5 percentage points in the coming fiscal year. Now is not the time to reduce billions of dollars in federal financial support for states to provide coverage to the millions of children currently enrolled and to all of those that may need CHIP support through the dual crises.

Since the enactment of CHIP in 1997, we have witnessed two decades of success in cutting the children's uninsured rate to just 4.5 percent in FY 2016. Unfortunately, the number of uninsured children has begun to rise in the last few years (an estimated 5.5 percent in FY 2018) and the health coverage of millions more will be threatened during the pandemic and economic crises.

Unfortunately, children are often treated as an afterthought in policymaking. While much attention has rightfully been paid to Medicare and Medicaid through this process, CHIP has been largely ignored despite the fact 10 million children receive health coverage through the program. Your bill provides an example of support for children's coverage that is very much needed.

The fact is that children are not all right. New research highlights the negative consequences that children are facing with respect to the coronavirus but also due to missed developmental screenings, delayed treatment for underlying conditions, increased stress and need for mental health treatment, the loss of school health and IDEA supports, the postponement of immunizations, increases in child hunger, and evidence of increases in child abuse and maltreatment.

Thank you for your bipartisan leadership in protecting children that rely upon CHIP for their health coverage and well-being. We strongly urge the inclusion of your legislation in any forthcoming legislation in the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President