



March 29, 2023

The Honorable Joe Neguse
2400 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Neguse,

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, we are writing to express our support for the Save Children's Coverage Act (H.R. 1316).

Children's health needs are unique. In the earliest years of their lives, they are rapidly developing. That development sets the foundation for the rest of their lives. If they are not consistently getting periodic, age-appropriate care, that foundation is weakened, potentially leading to costlier physical and behavioral health issues down the line. A pre-requisite to ensuring children are receiving care that helps their early development is to ensure they have a consistent source of health coverage. We are grateful that Congress passed the requirement that all states must provide 12 months of continuous coverage to children in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) through the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023. However, that requirement, which starts January 1, 2024, does not go far enough to ensure that children have stable, quality health coverage through the most important years of their lives. Having uninterrupted health cover coverage from birth to age 6 would allow children to have consistent access to well-child visits, immunizations and specialty care. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that children should have regular, routine checkups at birth, three-to-five days after birth, at 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24, and 30 months and once a year thereafter into adulthood. Young children need these visits to ensure any social, emotional, or developmental delays are detected early before beginning school.

Some states have already taken the initiative to seek section 1115 waivers to provide continuous eligibility through age 5, including Oregon, which became the first state to have their waiver application approved. While the section 1115 waiver process does allow states to provide early continuous eligibility, the process can be quite burdensome and time-consuming for states that want to improve upon Medicaid and CHIP to ensure that children have consistent access to quality, affordable coverage. Without a more streamlined option for states to pursue, children will be more likely to fall through the cracks and lose health coverage during the period when they need it the most.

The Save Children's Coverage Act is a strong step forward, giving states the option to provide early childhood continuous eligibility through a state plan amendment (SPA) instead of needing to go through the section 1115 waiver process. Beyond early childhood continuous eligibility,

the bill will also provide states with a similar option to provide 24 months of consistent coverage for kids ages 6-18. Both provisions will help states to improve the health and well-being of children.

We commend you for recognizing the importance of continuous eligibility to help children maintain consistent health coverage through Medicaid and CHIP so they can get access to the care that meets their unique health needs. We look forward to working with you to pass the Save Children's Coverage Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue ink color.

Bruce Lesley
President