



STATE OF WASHINGTON
HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY

626 8th Avenue, SE • P.O. Box 45502 • Olympia, Washington 98504-5502

July 6, 2017

The Honorable Patty Murray, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Adam Smith, U.S. Rep.
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, U.S. Rep.
The Honorable Jaime Herrera Beutler, U.S. Rep.
The Honorable Denny Heck, U.S. Rep.
The Honorable Dan Newhouse, U.S. Rep.
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Rick Larsen, U.S. Rep.
The Honorable Dave Reichert, U.S. Rep.
The Honorable Suzan DelBene, U.S. Rep.
The Honorable Derek Kilmer, U.S. Rep.
The Honorable Pramila Jayapal, U.S. Rep.
House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Dear Members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation,

I am writing to reiterate Governor Inslee's previous letter to you urging your support for swift congressional action to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Our governor and the nation's governors have urged Congress to reauthorize CHIP, which has for two decades enjoyed overwhelming bipartisan support, for an additional five years.

Since 2000, Washington's low-income families have relied upon CHIP to provide their children with access to affordable, comprehensive group health coverage delivered through a statewide network of health care providers. CHIP has helped drive the rate of uninsured children in Washington to less than 3 percent - one of the lowest rates in the country. CHIP coverage costs less on a per-child basis than federal subsidies for purchase of plans through health exchanges. If CHIP funding is not extended it could increase federal costs for ensuring coverage of Washington children.

The CHIP program funds essential Washington health care services including –

- Health care coverage for over 65,000 Washington children annually;
- Immunizations that prevent the spread of disease;
- A toll-free outreach line assisting Washington families with information on healthcare options;
- The Washington Poison Center, which provides 24/7 emergency phone response in the event of a poisoning emergency.

The CHIP program was reauthorized with strong bipartisan support in 2015, as a part of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA). However, federal funding was not approved beyond September 2017. Washington spends its entire CHIP allotment each fiscal year. Without continued funding we will be forced to take steps to reduce coverage, putting at risk the tremendous gains we have made in children's health over the last twenty years.

We are asking that Congress extend CHIP funding for an additional five years, including the Qualifying State option under CHIPRA, Section 107, which last year allowed our state to access nearly \$100 million in additional

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federal investment for Medicaid children above 133 percent of Federal Poverty Level. We are also asking for an extension of the additional 23 percent enhanced federal match authorized under Section 2101 of the ACA, which provided Washington \$145 million in federal investment over the last biennium. Extension of this funding will provide a pivotal element of security for Washington's children as we continue forward with efforts to transform healthcare delivery in Washington State.

I understand that some have suggested that CHIP reauthorization be attached to legislation being considered in the Congress to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. This would be a mistake. Our state opposes these legislative proposals for the significant adverse impacts they (the House American Health Care Act, and the Senate Better Care Reconciliation Act) would have both on our citizens' health care access and affordability, as well as our state budget and economy. In the strongest terms we urge you not to tie CHIP's fate to controversial and partisan legislation. Doing so could jeopardize the renewal of this program - and care for tens of thousands of Washington children.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lou McDermott', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lou McDermott
Acting Director