

January 10, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Greg Walden
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Wyden, Chairman Walden, and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the more than 560,000 physicians and medical students represented by the combined memberships of the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Osteopathic Association, and the American Psychiatric Association, we are writing to urge Congress to take immediate action to enact a five-year extension of funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and to extend other critical health programs in order to ensure that our patients have ongoing access to crucial affordable and comprehensive coverage options and services.

Since its inception in 1997, CHIP, together with Medicaid, has helped to reduce the number of uninsured children by a remarkable 68 percent. CHIP has a proven track record of providing high-quality, cost-effective coverage for low-income children and pregnant women in working families. CHIP was a smart, bipartisan solution to a real problem facing American children and families when it was adopted in 1997 and its importance and impact in securing a healthy future for children in low-income families has only increased.

There is widespread, bipartisan agreement about the continued need for CHIP to provide affordable, pediatric-specific coverage to almost 9 million children and 370,000 pregnant women who cannot afford private coverage or lack access to employer-based coverage. It is a model program that has played a critical role in reducing the number of uninsured children by more than 50 percent while improving health outcomes and access to care for children and pregnant women across the nation.

More than three months since the September 30th deadline to extend federal funding for CHIP, Congress has failed to pass a long-term extension. States have already started to notify families that they may not have a source of coverage should Congress fail to enact a long-term extension of CHIP funding, and several states have started to use funds meant to operate the program to start shutting it down. The short-term CHIP and other health program funding included in the late-December Continuing Resolution (CR) is not enough to prevent states from continuing these actions, and only

causes more chaos and confusion on the ground. We urge Congress to honor CHIP's 20 years of success by enacting a five-year extension of CHIP funding so that this critical source of health coverage for the children and pregnant women we treat every day will be maintained into the future.

In addition to CHIP, funding lapsed on October 1st for several other health care programs critical to millions of low-income, working Americans and others who face financial challenges, including: Community Health Centers Program (CHCs); Medicaid disproportionate share hospital payments (DSH); the National Health Service Corps (NHSC); Maternal Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV); and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program (THCGME).

Despite the bipartisan support for each of these programs their futures now hang in the balance because of Congressional inaction. Certainty surrounding these essential health care programs expired more than 100 days ago creating confusion and needless stress for American families. Congress failed to capitalize on its latest opportunity to end this uncertainty when it passed a continuing resolution that funded the government until Jan. 19, without enacting a long-term funding solution for these programs that provide vital services to millions of Americans.

A continued delay in passing legislation to fund these programs for the long term is unacceptable—the negative consequences of Congressional inaction already are being felt and will be compounded in the coming weeks. While Congress expresses support for these programs, the failure to provide long-term funding sends a very different message to states and families. Confidence in the future of these vital programs cannot be restored with short-term funding measures, and congressional delays jeopardize the long-term health and wellbeing of patients, providers, states, stakeholders, and our country at large.

Our members are the foundation of the U.S. health system and include the front-line physicians who care for families, adults, adolescents, women, and children in rural, urban, wealthy, and low-income communities. As such, our groups are united in asking for an immediate extension of these programs, which enjoy widespread support among both chambers and both political parties, in a bicameral, bipartisan fashion. There is no excuse for further delays on extending these critical, bipartisan health programs, and we urge Congress to include a long-term funding solution ahead of the January 19th deadline.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association