

September 6, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
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:

We, the undersigned faith organizations and members of the Washington Interreligious Staff Community (WISC), write to urge you to enact a long-term funding extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) as soon as possible. CHIP funding is set to expire on September 30, 2017, and we urge swift action to provide certainty to states, families, and the 8.9 million children who rely on CHIP.

While we come from different faith traditions, we share a moral vision of a health care system that offers health, wholeness, and human dignity for all. Our scriptures and sacred teachings inspire a special concern for those experiencing vulnerability, such as children. We believe that no family should have to face the terrible decision between putting food on the table, paying rent, or providing health coverage for their child. We see funding CHIP as part of our sacred obligation to care for one another.

Since CHIP was created with bipartisan support in 1997, the rate of children without health insurance has fallen from nearly 15% in 1997 to a record-low 5% in 2015.¹ For two decades, the program has provided quality coverage to millions of children in working families whose parents earn too much to qualify for Medicaid and not enough to purchase private health insurance on their own. CHIP provides affordable, age-appropriate health coverage to children and pregnant women who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but who cannot afford to buy private coverage. It offers crucial financial protection for the families of over 2 million children with

¹ Samantha Artiga and Petry Ubri, *Key Issues in Children's Health Coverage*, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, <http://kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/key-issues-in-childrens-health-coverage/>

chronic illnesses, reducing out-of-pocket costs and easing their difficult burden. Without this program, many of these families would be unable to afford health insurance for their children.²

Without swift action to extend funding, many states will soon exhaust their leftover funds for their CHIP programs. This uncertainty is bad for the 8.9 million children enrolled in CHIP who would be at risk of losing their health coverage. To provide certainty and security for families, CHIP funding should be extended as soon as possible. This program is too important in the lives of millions of children and families to be put off until the last moment.

CHIP has enjoyed strong, bipartisan support over the past two decades. Congress last extended CHIP with overwhelming support across the aisle as part of the Medicaid and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015. We urge you to continue this tradition and not let politics interfere with the lives of millions of children and hardworking families. CHIP funding reauthorization must not be used as a vehicle for harmful policies such as cuts to Medicaid or partial repeal of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. To use this must-pass legislation as a bargaining tool for other goals would be irresponsible and immoral.

People of faith throughout the country urge you to continue guiding us toward a moral vision of a U.S. health care system that offers health, wholeness, and human dignity for all because it is inclusive, affordable, accessible, and accountable. It must be a priority to continue the current CHIP program that is working well for states, families, and our nation's children. The faithful way forward is to enact a bipartisan, long-term funding extension of CHIP to provide certainty and security as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

American Muslim Health Professionals
Bread for the World
Center on Conscience & War
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces
The Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Islamic Society of North America
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Methodist Federation for Social Action
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church in North America
Pax Christi USA
PC(USA) Office of Public Witness

² Michelle Andrews, "CHIP Offers Families With Seriously Ill Kids More Financial Protection Than ACA Plans," Kaiser Health News, <http://khn.org/news/chip-offers-families-with-seriously-ill-kids-more-financial-protection-than-aca-plans/>

Reformed Church in America
Religious Institute
Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Sisters of the Holy Cross
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Justice Team
Society of St. Vincent de Paul, National Council of the United States
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society