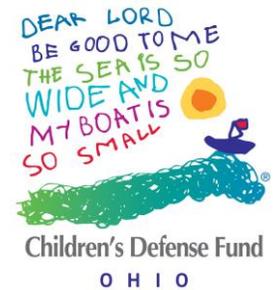


October 3, 2017

Re: Extension of Children's Health Insurance Program

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515



Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone,

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio's (CDF-Ohio) Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. Part of fulfilling this mission is ensuring that Ohio children have access to high-quality health care. We urge you to quickly pass legislation extending funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). **Urgent action is necessary** to provide certainty for Ohio's families and our state budget.

CHIP is critical to the health of nearly 9 million children and, together with Medicaid, has helped us reach a [historic 95.5% insured rate](#) for children nationally. In Ohio, CHIP covers over 223,000 children and has contributed to an insured rate of 96.4%—outpacing the national average.

As you know, federal funding for CHIP **expired on September 30th**. In July, the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) [estimated](#) that four states, including the District of Columbia, would run out of funds by December. However, a recent Kaiser Family Foundation [study](#) estimated that at least ten states would run out by the end of this year. Minnesota's Department of Human Services released its own [analysis](#) showing that its funds run out in September rather than later in the year as noted in earlier reports.

In Ohio, we expect to exhaust CHIP funds by March 2018. Without Congress's swift action, Ohio faces great uncertainty and would either need to alter the state budget considerably to cover the more than 223,000 Ohio children on CHIP, or wind down the program, leaving children without access to needed health care and pregnant women without access to prenatal and maternity care in a state with one of the worst infant mortality rates in the country.

CHIP is vital to the health of Ohio's children because it gives them access to the health services they need and deserve. Children are not little adults; they have their own unique set of health care needs. CHIP ensures those needs are met by providing an age-appropriate benefit package delivered by a network of pediatric providers. In Ohio, CHIP children receive Medicaid benefits, including access to preventive care. Ensuring that children have access to preventive care is vital; it sets children on a lifelong pathway of good health. Research shows that investing in children now is an investment in our future. Healthy children are ready to learn and succeed. CHIP is an important tool that creates an equitable opportunity for all children to become healthy, productive members of our communities. Finally, Medicaid and CHIP work together to keep Ohio families from falling in to medical debt and from having to make impossible choices between rent, food, and prescriptions.

We urge you to quickly pass a clean extension of CHIP and continue the bipartisan commitment to this successful program. Like [MACPAC](#) and the [National Governors Association](#), we encourage the committee to provide a five-year extension of funding at the current enhanced match. We further urge you to address funding for other important health programs—like community health centers and Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting services—whose funding also expired on September 30th.

Sincerely,

Ashon McKenzie, Esq.
Policy Director
Children's Defense Fund-Ohio