

AMERICA'S HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

September 24, 2004

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our strong support for the bipartisan legislation introduced to preserve funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Health care providers in communities across the nation have witnessed first-hand the solid progress that SCHIP has made in providing health care services to more of America's children. It is critical that we maintain this progress by protecting SCHIP funds.

The Children's Health Protection and Improvement Act of 2004 (S. 2759, H.R. 4936), introduced by Sens. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) and Lincoln Chafee (R-RI) and Reps. John Dingell (D-MI) and Joe Barton (R-TX), would preserve nearly \$1.1 billion in unused federal SCHIP funds allocated for fiscal years 1998, 1999 and 2000 that will expire and revert to the federal treasury on September 30. This legislation would make these funds available through fiscal year 2007 and continue to use the current methodology for distributing unspent funds.

The longer-term federal funding shortfalls for SCHIP are well known and we encourage Congress to enact adequate remedies when it reauthorizes the program. In the meantime, because of the recent increase in the number of uninsured Americans, it is crucial that we preserve and maintain programs that provide health care coverage – especially programs like SCHIP that focus on vulnerable populations.

We urge swift enactment of the bipartisan legislation to preserve SCHIP funds. Allowing these funds to lapse would be a life-threatening disservice to many families who have no where else to turn for care.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

American Hospital Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Federation of American Hospitals
Healthcare Leadership Council
National Association of Children's Hospitals
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
National Association of Urban Hospitals
Premier, Inc.
VHA Inc.