



September 21, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Senator Tammy Baldwin
The Honorable Senator Ron Johnson
The Honorable Congressman Mark Pocan
The Honorable Congressman Ron Kind

The Honorable Congresswoman Gwen Moore
The Honorable Congressman James Sensenbrenner
The Honorable Congressman Glenn Grothman
The Honorable Congressman Sean Duffy
The Honorable Congressman Mike Gallagher

Dear Wisconsin Congressional Delegation,

On behalf of over 50 organizations committed to the health and well-being of Wisconsin children and families, we urge you to reauthorize stable, long-term funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). CHIP provides a vital source of support for children's access to quality, affordable health care that keeps kids and families healthy. In September, we hope you will pass a clean five-year extension of CHIP so we can continue to provide healthcare for Wisconsin kids without further burdening the Medicaid budget.

For 20 years CHIP has enjoyed strong, bipartisan support. There is no reason why that should not continue, and we were pleased to see that a bipartisan plan was developed by Senators Hatch and Wyden. Congress should pass a five-year reauthorization to provide continuity and stability to providers and state lawmakers. Families also need funding reauthorized by September 30, 2017, so they do not live in doubt over whether their children will have health care in the months ahead.

Medicaid and CHIP are designed to work in partnership. Together they have helped ensure that 97 percent of Wisconsin kids have access to the health care they need, while also helping to stabilize Wisconsin's budget. Medicaid and CHIP provide critical health coverage to about 500,000 Wisconsin children. Both programs are needed to help ensure that every kid has a chance to grow up healthy and succeed in life.

Medicaid and CHIP offer free or low-cost health coverage for kids, and cover important services like doctor and dentist visits, immunizations, prescriptions, hospital visits and more. They are a lifeline for working families in Wisconsin who are not offered or cannot afford health insurance on their own.

Governor Walker expressed his support for the last reauthorization of CHIP funding in 2015. His letter states that Wisconsin's CHIP allotment represents "an important component of funding the state devotes to health coverage for low income children. It is crucial to provide states with predictable funding levels in the coming years."

Reauthorization of the CHIP program is extremely important for Wisconsin. If federal support for CHIP is significantly reduced, state legislators in Wisconsin could face a huge hole in the Medicaid budget that they would have to close either by making significant spending cuts or raising taxes.

Reauthorization should preserve the federal CHIP funding “bump” and the maintenance of effort requirements for states. The Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement ensures that children have consistent, stable access to health insurance, giving their families peace of mind. It prevents states from taking steps that would limit kids’ coverage through CHIP or Medicaid. The 23 percentage point “bump” has allowed states to provide access to coverage for more kids and expand eligibility and services so more kids can get the care they need. Eliminating it would create a hole in the state budget of about \$73 million per year. The MOE standards and enhanced CHIP funding ensure that the quality, affordable health coverage families depend on for their kids is secure and stable.

When children have consistent access to coverage, they can get ongoing care, including checkups and preventive screenings that help them grow up healthy and go to school ready to learn. Putting these additional federal dollars into CHIP allows states to use more of their own funds to invest in other programs that can also improve the lives of kids and families.

The past 20 years have shown that CHIP works. It supports children in families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but don’t have access to affordable coverage. It’s an effective way to cover kids at the lowest cost and gives Wisconsin the flexibility to run programs that work best for them.

Wisconsin has been a leading state in ensuring access to quality health care for kids. We must not make budget cuts that leave kids worse off. The time is now to pass a five-year funding extension that does not change the program or reverse improvements we’ve made, allowing us to keep and build upon the gains Wisconsin has made in covering kids.

Thank you for your attention to this extremely important issue for Wisconsin children and for the financing of our BadgerCare program.

Sincerely,

Wisconsin Council of Churches
Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools
Wisconsin Medical Society
Kids Forward
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Wisconsin Education Association Council
Medical College of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association
UW Health - American Family Children's Hospital
9to5 Milwaukee
ABC for Health, Inc.
Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin
Citizen Action of Wisconsin

Community Advocates, Inc.
Community Advocates Public Policy Institute
Congregations United to Serve Humanity
Disability Rights Wisconsin
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
Easterseals Southeast Wisconsin
Family Voices of Wisconsin
GRandparents United for Madison Public Schools
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation
Latino Children and Families Council
Linda and Gene Farley Wisconsin Chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program
Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin
Madison-area Urban Ministry
Mental Health America of Wisconsin
Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force
NAMI Dane County
NAMI Greater Milwaukee
NAMI Wisconsin
National Association of Social Workers, Wisconsin Chapter
One Wisconsin Now
Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin
The Arc of Wisconsin
SEIU Health Care Wisconsin
Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations
Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health
Wisconsin Association of Family and Children's Agencies
Wisconsin Association of School Nurses
Wisconsin Board for People with Development Disabilities
Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers
Wisconsin Community Action Program Association
Wisconsin Democracy Campaign
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Wisconsin Family Ties
Wisconsin Head Start Association
Wisconsin Jewish Conference
Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group
Wisconsin Voices
WISDOM

cc: Linda Seemeyer, Secretary, Department of Health Services
Michael Heifetz, Medicaid Director