

September 5, 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.<sup>1</sup> For two decades, the program has provided affordable, quality, and age-appropriate 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 also provides financial protection for the families of over 2 million children with chronic illnesses, reducing out-of-pocket costs and

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<sup>1</sup> 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/>

easing their difficult burden. Without this program, many of these families would be unable to afford health insurance for their children.<sup>2</sup>

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 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  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council of Churches  
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  
Reformed Church in America  
Religious Institute

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<sup>2</sup> 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/>

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, 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