

May 29, 2018

Dear Honorable Members of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress,

As pediatricians and public health researchers with the non-partisan network, Children's HealthWatch, we write to you today to urge the protection of funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). We are grateful you approved a 10-year extension of CHIP as part of the FY2018 Omnibus spending package, but we are deeply concerned that the planned rescission of funding approved by Congress will actively harm the health and well-being of children across the country.

An extensive body of scientific evidence, including research from Children's HealthWatch, shows that children's first years of life are a critical period of rapid brain and body growth. This is the time when infants and toddlers form the fundamental neurological architecture of the brain, which largely sets the trajectory for their health for the rest of their life. In addition, they are laying the groundwork for lifelong health. Lack of access to affordable health care in these early years negatively impacts health across the lifecourse.

Children's HealthWatch research shows that young children in families that had to forego medical care or prescriptions for the child due to cost were more likely to: be in poor health, have a history of hospitalizations, be at risk for developmental delays, and live in families that struggle to afford enough food.<sup>1</sup>

Other research has demonstrated that compared to uninsured children, children who participate in CHIP are more likely to receive primary and preventive care, are less likely to have unmet health needs, and are more likely to make gains in their school performance.<sup>2,3</sup> CHIP also has been shown to reduce avoidable hospitalizations and child mortality.<sup>4,5</sup>

CHIP is a successful, bipartisan program that provides 9 million U.S. children with comprehensive and affordable health care coverage.<sup>6</sup> Reducing funding for CHIP may result in a reduction in health insurance coverage for children, especially if there is a recession, which would place them at risk of poor health and educational outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

Long-term, robust funding for CHIP will continue to ensure children's opportunities for health and educational and workplace success now and throughout their lives. Based on our knowledge and expertise as pediatricians and public health researchers, and a large body of solid research evidence, we strongly urge you to oppose rescission cuts to this critical program. Cutting funding to CHIP will jeopardize the health and future prosperity of all Americans.

Sincerely,



Megan Sandel MD, MPH  
Co-Lead Principal Investigator  
Boston, MA



Diana Becker Cutts, MD  
Co-Lead Principal Investigator  
Minneapolis, MN

Mariana Chilton, PhD, MPH  
Director, Center for Hunger-Free Communities  
Principal Investigator, Children's HealthWatch

Eduardo Ochoa Jr., MD  
Principal Investigator, Children's HealthWatch  
Little Rock, AR

Deborah A. Frank, MD  
Principal Investigator and Founder, Children's  
HealthWatch  
Boston, MA

Patrick H. Casey, MD  
Principal Investigator, Children's HealthWatch  
Little Rock, AR

John Cook, PhD, MAEd  
Principal Investigator, Children's HealthWatch  
Boston, MA

Maureen Black, PhD  
Principal Investigator, Children's HealthWatch  
Baltimore, MD

Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, MPH  
Executive Director, Children's HealthWatch

---

Children's HealthWatch is a nonpartisan network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and policy and child health experts committed to improving children's health in America. Every day from the frontlines of pediatric health care, in urban hospitals across the country, we collect data on children ages zero to four who are from families experiencing economic hardship. We analyze and release our findings to academics, legislators, and the public to inform public policies and practices that can give all children equal opportunities for healthy, successful lives.

For questions or further information, please contact Allison Bovell-Ammon, Deputy Director of Policy Strategy for Children's HealthWatch at [allison.bovell-ammon@bmc.org](mailto:allison.bovell-ammon@bmc.org) or 617-414-3580.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ettinger de Cuba S, Sheward R, Poindexter D, Bovell-Ammon A, Ochoa E. Affordable Health Care Keeps Children and Families Healthy. *Children's HealthWatch*. May 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Paradise J. The Impact of Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP): What Does the Research Tell Us? Kaiser Family Foundation. July 2014. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-impact-of-the-childrens-health-insurance-program-chip-what-does-the-research-tell-us/>

<sup>3</sup> Morrow S, Kenney GM, Anderson N, Clemans-Cope L, Dubay L, Long SK, Wissoker D. Trade-Offs Between Public and Private Coverage for Low-Income Children Have Implications for Future Policy Debates. *Health Affairs*, 2014;33(8):1367-1374.

<sup>4</sup> Howell E, Decker S, Hogan S, Yemane A, Foster J. Declining Child Mortality and Continuing Racial Disparities in the Era of the Medicaid and SCHIP Insurance Coverage Expansions. *American Journal of Public Health*, December 2010; 100(12).

<sup>5</sup> Dafny L, and Gruber J. Public Insurance and Child Hospitalizations: Access and Efficiency Effects. *Journal of Public Economics*, 2005,85. <http://economics.mit.edu/files/6435>

<sup>6</sup> The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Statistical Enrollment Data System (SEDS) Combined CHIP Enrollment Total Report and Form CMS 64.EC (As of 02/15/2017). 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.medicare.gov/chip/downloads/fy-2016-childrens-enrollment-report.pdf>. Accessed on 5/18/2018

<sup>7</sup> Stein J. Are Republicans really proposing to cut funding for poor kids' health insurance? *Washington Post*. 2018 May 8. Available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/05/08/are-republicans-really-proposing-to-cut-funding-for-poor-kids-health-insurance/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.25291d8d1aa1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/05/08/are-republicans-really-proposing-to-cut-funding-for-poor-kids-health-insurance/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.25291d8d1aa1)