



September 18, 2014

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Senate Hearing on the Children's Health Insurance Program: Protecting America's Children and Families

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Hatch:

AAPCHO represents 35 community-based organizations, primarily community health centers, across the United States. AAPCHO members are located in communities with high concentrations of medically underserved Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders, and are at the forefront in providing responsive, financially affordable, and culturally and linguistically appropriate primary health care services.

AAPCHO strongly supports the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). We urge Congress to provide a funding extension for CHIP to ensure that millions of children, including large numbers of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander children, can retain stable, comprehensive health insurance coverage. Without this essential coverage, up to 2 million CHIP-eligible children could lose access to health coverage, while the rest would likely get less comprehensive coverage at higher cost.

We thank the Senate Finance Committee, Subcommittee on Health for their timely hearing, *Children's Health Insurance Program: Protecting America's Children and Families*. We are pleased to offer our support for Congressional action on funding CHIP, which has enjoyed a long and bipartisan history of support.

CHIP plays a huge role in covering millions of children whose families make too much for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance. CHIP plays a critical role in coverage for low income children and children of color, and is a significant source of coverage for AAPCHO member center patients.

Having coverage isn't the full story: CHIP also offers children access to a robust set of services for their specific needs. Children covered by CHIP have better access to essential services than children who are uninsured. While states have significant flexibility to

determine the CHIP benefit package, children covered by CHIP are guaranteed a full package of needed health services. In some states, CHIP covers the wide range of enabling services including provisions for culturally and linguistically appropriate care.

Stable and affordable health insurance coverage is important for families—and the millions of families covered by CHIP rely on it for their children’s health care needs. As coverage options across states continue to shift, CHIP remains a constant. As the Marketplaces continue to evolve, CHIP continues to play a vital role in children’s coverage.

Congress needs to act to ensure that families don’t lose coverage. In 2015, more than 10 million children and adolescents, along with 370,000 pregnant women, are expected to be enrolled in CHIP. If additional funding is not authorized, many of these children will lose coverage or face significant barriers to coverage. In addition, some children will not be able to afford coverage due to the so-called “family glitch” which prevents families with an offer of employer-sponsored coverage from getting financial help in the Marketplace, even if the employer-sponsored coverage is unaffordable. This could impact many working parents.

Earlier this summer, Senator Rockefeller introduced The CHIP Extension Act (S2461). This legislation would expand federal funding for CHIP through FY2019 and enable several structural changes including extending CHIP bonus payments, making Express Lane eligibility permanent, and automatically enrolling newborns. On July 31, Representatives Pallone and Waxman introduced the CHIP Extension and Improvement Act of 2014. It extends federal CHIP funding through FY 2019 and also makes positive improvements to the CHIP program. These important pieces of legislation take important first steps towards funding CHIP. AAPCHO supports these leaders for their important steps forward.

AAPCHO now calls on the Senate Finance Committee, Subcommittee on Health to take a big step forward and commit to fully refunding CHIP immediately so that no child loses health insurance. AAPCHO’s member centers, and ultimately their patient populations, want to ensure that gaps in children’s health insurance coverage are addressed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey Caballero', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeffrey Caballero, MPH
Executive Director

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)