



TED STRICKLAND
GOVERNOR
STATE OF OHIO

August 18, 2008

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

Yesterday marked a year since the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid issued to states the August 17th directive on coverage under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). We have discussed how the directive hurts Ohio's ability to expand health care coverage to uninsured children.

More than a year has passed since Ohio originally submitted our proposal to expand Medicaid health care to an estimated 35,000 uninsured children. But despite repeated conversations and alternate submissions, not a single child has been helped. I am writing once again to urge you to approve Ohio's State Plan Amendments (SPAs) to expand health care coverage for uninsured children in families with income between 200 and 300 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL).

For the last year, Ohio has been working actively with your staff in the Baltimore and Chicago offices to find a mechanism, Medicaid and/or SCHIP, that can be approved by CMS to expand health care coverage for children. Our staff has worked with federal staff and, Secretary Leavitt, you and I have communicated in person and in writing.

Ohio originally asked for your assistance to extend coverage under Medicaid for our children in the 200-300% FPL group. Our request was denied, and we appealed the decision. That appeal hearing, originally scheduled for April, 2008, was delayed until June of this year. We await a decision.

In the 5 months while this appeal has been pending, Ohio sought several alternatives in conversations with CMS staff. Ohio received technical assistance and received verbal assurances from CMS staff that a SPA expanding eligibility to children up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level would be expeditiously approved. Ohio developed this alternate SPA and submitted it. In response, Ohio was asked more questions and given suggestions to resubmit the proposal to expand coverage up to 300

Page Two
August 18, 2008
The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt

percent of the FPL. Ohio did so, and as of the end of June, CMS has defined our revised request as a new SPA and has provided no response.

Our ongoing communication with CMS staff in the Central Office and Regional Office are focused more on bureaucratic details than on the substance or approvability of our proposal. The bottom line is, despite the overwhelming bipartisan support of Ohio's state government to extend health care to uninsured children and repeated attempts to comply with CMS guidance, none of Ohio's 35,000 uninsured children in this income level have received health care coverage. In short, Ohio's health care expansion for children is dying a death of a thousand paper cuts. Ohio's children deserve more.

Ohio has successfully implemented the Medicaid program for 43 years and was one of the first states to implement an SCHIP program 10 years ago. Ohio's proposal to expand health care coverage to uninsured children continues to enjoy the overwhelming support of the Ohio General Assembly. We intend to continue taking all necessary steps to ensure access to health care coverage for uninsured children in partnership with the federal government.

I urge you to immediately approve Ohio's State Plan Amendments to expand health care coverage to uninsured Ohio children.

I look forward to your earliest response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ted Strickland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ted Strickland
Governor