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Public Supports Strengthening Medicaid, SCHIP
President's FY '08 Budget 'Out of Touch' With Voters

WASHINGTON – President Bush's fiscal year 2008 budget proposal is out of touch with voters' priorities for children and families, according to survey results released today by Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families. As Congress prepares to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program this year, the president's budget misses an important opportunity to help states cover more children.

In an election-eve poll conducted by Lake Research Partners for CCF, 82 percent of American voters said that they would like to see Congress add new funds to SCHIP. Of these, two-thirds want to see Congress provide a funding level that allows states to cover even *more* children in SCHIP. In addition, 86 percent of voters want to invest more – not less – in Medicaid.

“These poll results show that the president's FY 2008 budget is out of touch with what the public wants for our nation's children and families,” said CCF Executive Director Cindy Mann. “Voters are looking to the president and Congress to help the nation move forward -- not backward -- in covering uninsured families.”

Instead of heeding voters' calls to strengthen Medicaid and SCHIP, the president's FY 2008 budget proposal asks Congress to cut Medicaid spending by more than \$25 billion over the next five years. These Medicaid cuts would come on the heels of \$6.9 billion (over five years) in gross Medicaid savings that the Bush administration obtained under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

The president's FY 2008 budget proposal puts the coverage of children at risk. The budget proposal would increase federal spending by an amount that falls far short of what is needed to maintain coverage of currently enrolled children. The Bush administration also proposes limiting the federal government's share of costs in SCHIP for children with incomes above 200 percent of the federal poverty level – the equivalent of \$2,862 a month in total earnings for a family of three.

“This country can do far better for its children,” Mann said. “Many states are trying to move forward to cover more children but the president's budget proposal could stop this progress in its tracks.”

The CCF voter survey also examined various proposals to change Medicaid that some federal and state legislators are considering. According to survey findings, voters say that legislators should look to pharmaceutical and health insurance companies to curb costs in Medicaid instead of cutting services.

Ninety-two percent of voters support Medicaid driving harder bargains with pharmaceutical and health insurance companies. In contrast, two-thirds of voters surveyed opposed proposals to limit how much government spends on Medicaid per person regardless of the person's medical needs or income, according to the survey.

“CCF’s survey results show that Americans value the role of Medicaid and SCHIP in providing coverage to low-income children and families who are facing rising health care costs and an uncertain job market,” said Joan Alker, senior researcher at Georgetown’s Center for Children and Families. “Our survey indicates that four out of 10 Americans have direct experience with the program and that support for keeping Medicaid strong is widespread,” she added.

The survey was conducted among 1,000 voters during the November mid-term elections and examined voters’ opinions about Medicaid and SCHIP.

The Center for Children and Families (CCF) is an independent, nonpartisan policy center based at Georgetown University’s Health Policy Institute whose mission is to expand and improve health coverage for America’s children and families.

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