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Statement by Cindy Mann on Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Enactment of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act is a major step toward the goal of assuring that all children and adults have access to quality, affordable healthcare.

As America's families continue to face rising healthcare costs and confront the possibility of unemployment during this economic turmoil, it is essential that we strengthen important lifelines to our nation's children. This new law will help reassure families that at least they won't have to worry about their children's health coverage if they find themselves unemployed and uninsured.

The Center for Children and Families recently issued a report on how the rising rate of unemployment impacts children's healthcare coverage. The report includes a profile of the Secrest family of Martinsville, VA. Gregory Secrest, who is invited to the White House today to be present when the President signs the CHIP reauthorization into law, worked for ten years at American of Martinsville, a Virginia-based furniture manufacturer, until the plant was closed last year. He not only lost his job, he lost healthcare coverage for his family.

Mr. Secrest told us that one of the most difficult aspects of being unemployed and uninsured is "the struggle to fulfill his duty to keep his kids safe, healthy and protected from the burden of adult worries." Being uninsured impacted every aspect of his family's life. He had to tell his sons that they couldn't play football or basketball because he couldn't afford the healthcare costs if they were injured. Fortunately for the Secrests, the children were found to be eligible for Virginia's CHIP program known as FAMIS.

The law helps not only the Secrest family but hundreds of thousands of families like them across the country who are caught in the turbulence of the American economy.

For more information on the Secrest family and a copy of the report, visit <http://ccf.georgetown.edu/index/family-stories>.

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CCF is an independent, nonpartisan research and 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. For more information visit our Web site at ccf.georgetown.edu, email us at childhealth@georgetown.edu or call (202) 687-0880.