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Statement by Cindy Mann on House Approval of SCHIP Reauthorization

“I want to commend Speaker Pelosi and the U.S. House of Representatives for taking very positive action on behalf of America’s uninsured families as a first item of business in the new Congress. As unemployment rises and more and more families lose access to affordable healthcare coverage, it is essential that the federal government take action. During this economic turmoil, it is critical that we maintain and strengthen this important lifeline to our nation’s children and that we help financially-strapped states respond to the growing need for affordable healthcare coverage.

Making SCHIP reauthorization an early priority shows that Congress understands the fact that economic recovery begins with the nation’s families. This is an encouraging first step and a hopeful sign that a new era has come to Washington. I look forward to seeing this bipartisan bill enacted into law and for Congress to provide more assistance to uninsured families through an FMAP increase and ultimately health care reform.”

Background: The State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is a successful federal-state partnership that provides families the opportunity to purchase affordable health care coverage for uninsured children. The SCHIP bill is based on legislation developed in 2007 by a group of Democratic and Republican congressional leaders. It eventually won the support of 67 Senators and a clear majority of House members before being vetoed by President Bush. The new bill includes all of the key elements of this earlier effort:

- *Significant new SCHIP funding to expand coverage to an estimated 4.1 million more of America’s uninsured children, including the growing numbers affected by rising unemployment;*
- *New options that will help states enroll eligible children, and performance based bonuses to states that succeed in enrolling the lowest-income children in coverage; and*
- *A major new initiative to improve the quality of care provided to all of the country’s*

children.

In addition, the bill eliminates a 1996 restriction that imposed a five-year waiting period before legal immigrant children could enroll in Medicaid or SCHIP, The change recognizes the common-sense reality that as children grow and develop they cannot wait five years for the medical care they need.

More information on SCHIP Reauthorization available at <http://ccf.georgetown.edu>.

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