



Georgetown University Health Policy Institute

Center for Children and Families

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Cindy Mann, executive director of the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, issued the following statement on the release of the Senate Finance Committee chairman's proposal to renew the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP):

The release of the Senate Finance Committee Chairman's proposal to renew the State Children's Health Insurance Program sends a strong signal that Congress is ready to take action on children's coverage in a bipartisan manner. The agreement forged by Sens. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), Jay Rockefeller (D-W. Va), and Orrin Hatch (R- Utah) is a testament to the willingness of leading federal lawmakers to reach across party lines on behalf of children and to the strong public support among Americans for covering the nation's children.

The Finance Committee chairman's proposal includes some very positive provisions. It would offer coverage to an estimated 4.1 million additional children who otherwise would not have had coverage. Notably, the proposal makes a significant effort to cover the lowest-income uninsured children, many of whom are eligible for Medicaid. It would help states reach these children through targeted financial support and by removing red-tape barriers to coverage.

At the same time, the proposal could do more in some areas. By committing only \$35 billion of the \$50 billion provided in the congressional budget resolution for SCHIP reauthorization, the mark misses an opportunity to go even further in reaching more of the nine million children in America without health insurance. In addition, the proposal would limit states' ability to provide much-needed coverage to the parents in low-income families and fails to give states the option to cover children and pregnant women who are legal immigrants.

The Baucus-Grassley- Rockefeller-Hatch proposal is a major step in a process that continues to unfold. Ultimately, success will be measured by how well congressional action moves the nation closer to the widely-shared goal of ensuring that every child in America has health insurance. A diverse array of states across the nation is moving forward, but cannot continue to do so without strong federal support. Congress should take every available opportunity to deliver that support.

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