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NEW REPORT: STATES MOVING FORWARD ON CHILD HEALTH ***Strong SCHIP Reauthorization Critical***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A new report by the Georgetown Center for Children and Families (CCF) confirms that state governments are taking strong steps to strengthen and expand children's health coverage, but quick supportive action by Congress is critical to the success of these efforts. The report, *Children's Health Coverage: States Moving Forward*, released by CCF at an event sponsored with the PICO National Network of more than 1,000 faith communities and the New England Alliance for Children's Health (NEACH), highlights actions in 29 states and the District of Columbia.

"State leaders are making children's coverage a priority," said Jocelyn Guyer, CCF Deputy Executive Director. "But this is a critical time, and they need quick and decisive action from Congress to support their actions."

The report highlights that, since January 2006, states from Alaska to Ohio to New York have enacted or advanced proposals to increase enrollment of uninsured children already eligible for public coverage and, in some instances, to expand eligibility for these programs. The report also underscores the bipartisan support for children's coverage in state capitals, noting examples of leadership by Democratic and Republican officials.

"This is not a partisan issue, it's a kids' issue, a families' issue and a communities' issue," said Amy Rosenthal, NEACH Program Leader. "Democrats and Republicans in statehouses throughout the country are taking action as private health insurance becomes less available and more expensive for families and businesses."

The report emphasizes that the upcoming congressional debate on reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) will play a critical role. Congress has taken strong initial steps, by passing budget resolutions that allocate \$50 billion in new resources for SCHIP over five years.

State efforts will stand a better chance of success if Congress follows up with timely and effective SCHIP legislation that:

- Provides the full \$50 billion or more in additional resources;
- Offers states fiscal incentives and new tools to enroll in SCHIP and Medicaid the nearly seven in ten uninsured children who already are eligible for public coverage; and,
- Maintains and strengthens state options to expand eligibility for uninsured children and strengthen quality care.

“Faith communities firmly believe that America’s children should have the blessing of good health, and we commend state leaders for their work to expand children’s coverage,” said Rev. Cory Sparks of the PICO National Network. “But if Congress drops the ball or delays action, it could mean chaos – and even collapse – for state efforts to strengthen coverage for children. Congress has a moral obligation to act quickly and decisively to support state children’s coverage initiatives.”

The *Children’s Health Coverage: States Moving Forward* report is available for download at <http://ccf.georgetown.edu>. States cited in the report are: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

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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.

PICO is a national network of more than 1,000 religious congregations and 53 faith-based federations working to improve communities in 150 cities and 18 states.

The New England Alliance for Children's Health is a regional coalition of consumers, health care providers, business leaders, educators, interfaith organizations, and advocacy groups working to ensure that all children have access to high quality health care.