



## Keeping Children's Health Insurance Program

### **ISSUE:**

**Continued funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, is vital to millions of American children** who would lose access to health care through health insurance if the program were suddenly suspended or certain Medicaid changes were enacted. **This need is particularly urgent for low-income children and adolescents in need of mental health services.**

CHIP provides states with matching funds to help low-income children to age 19 receive health insurance who are otherwise ineligible for Medicaid, but whose families cannot afford private insurance. Since its start in 1997, CHIP has greatly reduced the number of children without health insurance. 5.5 million children nationwide rely on CHIP, with some states combining CHIP and Medicaid.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Two years ago, the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress voted overwhelmingly to pass the "Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015." The House vote was a resounding 392-37, and the Senate followed suit by a decisive vote of 92-8. Congress extended CHIP funding to renew the program through September 30, 2017.

CHIP has long enjoyed widespread bi-partisan support. Amidst the wider current debate about the future of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the Medicaid program, CHIP represents a well-regarded, viable, and needed program that should continue. It ensures access and coverage for children and adolescents ineligible for Medicaid - *those who cannot choose or buy health insurance for themselves* - and whose parents cannot afford private insurance.

**Congress has long stood up for kids, patients, and physicians in keeping the CHIP program up and running.** At this juncture, we need new legislation to continue CHIP funding without diminishing access to needed services or reimbursement levels. MACPAC, a non-partisan legislative branch agency created by Congress, has recently recommended 5 additional years of CHIP funding.

### **CONGRESSIONAL ASK:**

- Please continue to **support funding America's CHIP program** to meet the urgent health insurance needs of eligible children and adolescents, **including critical access to mental health services.**