

Insuring our Most Vulnerable

News on Children's Healthcare from Congressman John W. Olver

* * *E-NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2007* * *

CHAMP Act

On August 1, 2007, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3162, the Children's Health and Medical Protection (CHAMP) Act, which will reauthorize and provide a much needed expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

SCHIP currently provides affordable health insurance to approximately 6 million children who would otherwise have no insurance. An additional 6 million children are currently eligible for SCHIP or Medicaid coverage, but not enrolled. This is unacceptable.

The SCHIP program is set to expire on September 30, 2007. This represents an incredible opportunity to not only continue the program so that the SCHIP insured children continue to be protected, but to also extend this protective veil to children whose only means of medical care comes from a trip to the emergency room, care that could have been easily provided in a lower cost primary care setting.

When SCHIP was signed into law in 1997, Congress appropriated funds totaling nearly \$40 billion for FY1998-FY2007, with each state receiving access to a portion of the annual allotment. In recent years, the program has been so effective in enrolling children that some states, including Massachusetts, have run into funding shortfalls and have had to rely on leftover surpluses from other states as well as emergency funding secured from the federal government. I'm happy to say that H.R. 3162 creates a new predictable funding stream that will track the projected health coverage need in each state and provide funding accordingly so that no child will ever have to worry about abruptly losing their insurance.

In addition to a dependable funding stream, H.R. 3162 assures children have access to dental care coverage. No child should ever forgo necessary dental care. We all learned how critical this coverage is through the absolutely unnecessary death of 12-year-old Deamonte Driver, who lost his life as a result of bacteria from an untreated tooth ache traveling to his brain.

Children will also have increased access to mental health services, will have guaranteed access to Federally-qualified health clinics and rural health clinics, and will easily be able to sign up for SCHIP health insurance since some unnecessarily burdensome documentation requirements have been eliminated. Furthermore, access has been expanded to pregnant women, ensuring that we are taking care of our children from the very beginning, when prenatal care can eliminate future ailments that will only serve to increase healthcare costs in the long run.

I supported the CHAMP Act when it was passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 225-204 and I will continue to support this critical piece of legislation as it heads into conference with the Senate this fall. The morality of our society rests on what we choose to do for our children. We should do everything that we can to ensure they grow up to be healthy, productive members of it.

For Massachusetts SCHIP eligibility and enrollment information you can call the MassHealth Enrollment Center at 1-888-665-9993 or TTY: 1-888-665-9997 for the hearing impaired.

Sincerely,

John W. Olver
Member of Congress

P.S. If you would like to receive occasional updates on issues before Congress please sign up for my newsletter at <http://www.house.gov/olver>.

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