

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2007

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We urge you to rescind the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services August 17, 2007 letter to state health officials modifying the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) eligibility standards. If implemented, the new requirements will result in the loss of insurance coverage for women and children in California and overturn long-standing CMS policy.

The State Children's Health Insurance Program has been successful in reducing the number of uninsured low-income children in the United States by one third since its inception ten years ago. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have passed legislation expanding this program that is vital to California's children. Several counties in California already cover up to 300% of the poverty level, and the Governor and State Legislature have indicated their desire to expand this level of coverage statewide.

Flexibility in state SCHIP regulations allows states to account for significant differences in cost of living among different regions, which disproportionately affect California. Of particular concern is the new requirement that states must demonstrate enrollment of at least 95% of children below 200% of the federal poverty level before expanding eligibility to families with incomes greater than 250% of the poverty level. While California is committed to enrolling all eligible children, this is an unprecedented and virtually impossible administrative hurdle. We are also concerned about the requirement that a child go a full year without coverage. This harsh standard will prevent our children from getting the care they need. Further, precluding SCHIP expansion unless there has been a less than 2 percent decline in employer-sponsored insurance fails to recognize the various other reasons that employer-based coverage is declining for low-income families.

If these new federal requirements are implemented, tens of thousands of children in our state could lose their health care coverage. Without this essential preventative care, some of them would undoubtedly end up in our already burdened safety-net hospitals, driving up health care costs and lowering the quality and timeliness of care. We believe that SCHIP should cover more children and pregnant women, not less.

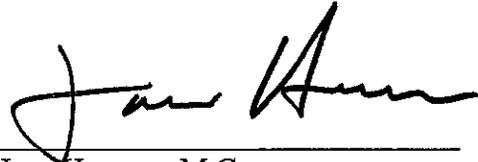
As members of the California Delegation, we reiterate our strong opposition to these modifications to long-standing CMS policy, and urge the administration to retract the letter.

We look forward to working with you in a bipartisan manner to protect the health of California's children.

Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren, Chair CDCD



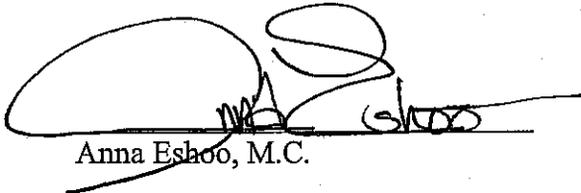
Jane Harman, M.C.



Henry Waxman, M.C.



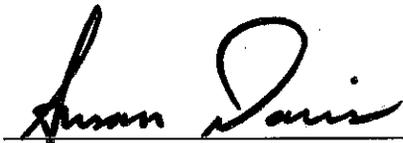
Lois Capps, M.C.



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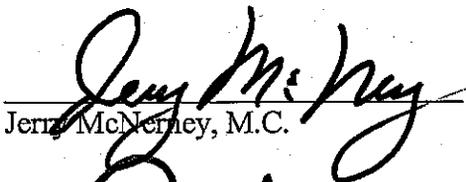
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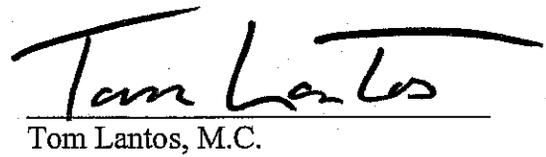
Susan Davis, M.C.



Lynn Woolsey, M.C.



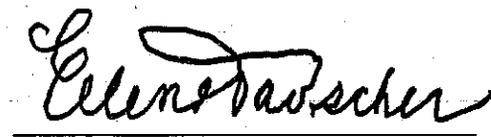
Jerry McNerney, M.C.



Tom Lantos, M.C.

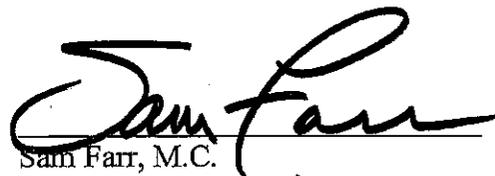


Pete Stark, M.C.

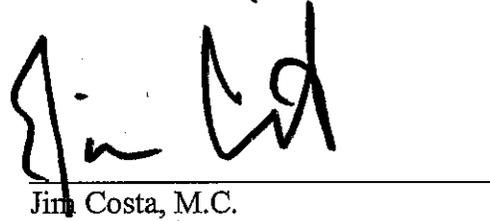


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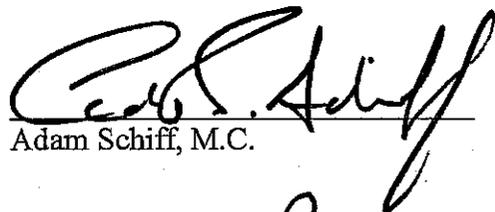

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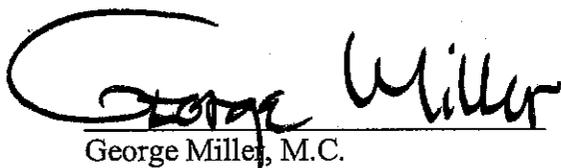

Jim Costa, M.C.

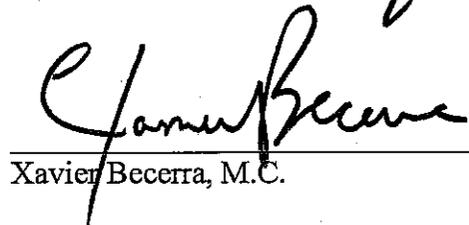

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Brad Sherman, M.C.

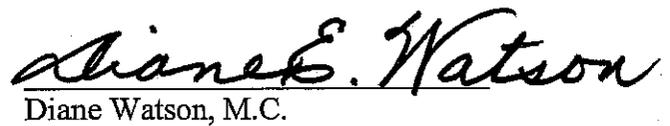

Howard Berman, M.C.


Adam Schiff, M.C.

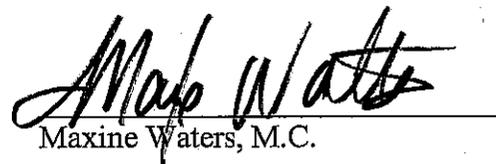

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