

November 13, 2017

Dear Honorable Members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation:

As advocacy organizations and service providers deeply committed to the well-being of young children, families, and communities in Illinois, we strongly urge you to quickly pass extensions of both the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the federal home visiting initiative known as the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program. Both of these programs expired September 30, causing uncertainty for families, as well as for the providers and state agencies who serve them.

CHIP and MIECHV are vitally important to young children and families in Illinois. CHIP provides \$496.8 million for an estimated 326,000 Illinois children who are part of the larger umbrella All Kids Program, which affords health care coverage for approximately 1.5 million children. All Kids and CHIP ensures that these children have access to preventative care including well-child visits, developmental screenings, immunizations, behavioral health and dental care. As a result of bipartisan support for CHIP, the uninsured rate for Illinois' children is just 2.5%, among the lowest in the country. Illinois has been able to reach such a low uninsured rate for children over the last few years partially due to the 23% Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) bump for CHIP. The fact is, ninety-nine percent of U.S. seniors are insured. Our children deserve no less.

Likewise, MIECHV has been a vital part of Illinois' home visiting system and our broader early childhood system promoting program expansion, innovation and efficiency. MIECHV supports young children and their families through evidence-based home visiting programs that improve outcomes for children, including children's health and school readiness. The latest data shows that MIECHV funds are not only providing services to nearly 1000 high-risk families annually, but are also allowing Illinois to explore innovative strategies to connect these supports to additional very high risk families, such as pregnant and parenting youth in Illinois' child welfare system and families experiencing homelessness.

We strongly urge you to ask your leadership to immediately reauthorize and fully fund both the CHIP and MIECHV programs for 5 years, as well as maintain the FMAP bump for CHIP, to ensure access to high quality continuous coverage for all children. Failing to meet children's health and developmental needs today prevents Illinois from reaping the long-term social and economic benefits associated with children's health coverage and evidence-based home visiting, including increased educational attainment and higher future earning potential. Allowing both these programs to expire will deny families these essential services and undermine Illinois' comprehensive continuum of care.

We appreciate your long-standing bipartisan support of these programs. We urge you to honor your commitment to our state's youngest residents by investing in their well-being and passing fully funded five-year extensions for CHIP and MIECHV, without further delay.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Illinois

AIDS Foundation of Chicago

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

Chicago Children's Advocacy Center

Child Abuse Council Quad Cities

Children's Home + Aid (Illinois)

DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform

Erikson Institute

E.T. & Associates

EverThrive Illinois

Family Focus

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois

Health & Medicine Policy Research Group

HealthConnect One

Healthy Families Chicago

Illinois Action for Children

Illinois Association for the Education of Young  
Children (ILAEYC)  
Illinois Birth Justice  
Illinois Childhood Trauma Coalition  
Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership  
Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Illinois Collaboration on Youth  
Illinois Developmental Therapy Association  
Illinois Head Start Association  
Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and  
Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)  
Illinois Psychiatric Society  
Illinois Public Health Association  
Juvenile Protective Association  
Kaleidoscope  
Lake County Health Department and Community  
Health Center  
Latino Policy Forum  
Legal Council for Health Justice  
Marillac St. Vincent Family Services  
McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership,  
National Louis University

Metropolitan Family Services  
National Council of Jewish Women  
New Moms Inc.  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Ounce of Prevention Fund  
POWER-PAC, a project of Communities Organizing  
and Family Issues (COFI)  
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois  
Project IRENE  
Rainbows for All Children  
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law  
Save the Children Action Network  
Shawnee Health Services  
Stephenson County Health Department – Healthy  
Families  
Test Positive Aware Network  
Thresholds  
United Way of Illinois  
United Way of Metro Chicago  
VNA Health Care  
Voices for Illinois Children  
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago