

December 14, 2017

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2471 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members,

On behalf of the American Dental Association (ADA) and its 161,000 members, and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) and its 10,000 members, we are writing today to urge Congress to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). It has been 75 days since CHIP's authorization expired and while we appreciate the work that has been done in both the House and Senate to move toward passing legislation, we cannot wait any longer.

CHIP provides much needed oral health services to the nearly 9 million children and pregnant women enrolled in the program. Dental care has the highest level of cost barriers compared to other health care services, with more individuals forgoing needed dental care over prescription drugs, medical care, eyeglasses or mental health services.¹ Poor oral health has serious long-term effects on an individual's life. Tooth decay remains the most common, chronic disease among children and adolescents, impacting school performance and attendance. Early intervention can prevent long-term problems, which extend into adulthood and can impact an individual's employability, military readiness and overall health status.

Untreated dental disease has a significant economic impact on our healthcare system. For example, in 2014 there were 2.2 million emergency room visits for dental-related problems at a cost of \$1.9 billion dollars. This amounts to one emergency room visit for a dental condition every 14 seconds in the United States, costing approximately \$863 per visit compared with the average cost of a dental office visit at \$240.²

¹ American Dental Association Health Policy Institute. Cost Barriers to Dental Care in the U.S. Accessed December 6, 2017.

² American Dental Association Health Policy Institute Analysis of 2014 Truven and Nationwide Emergency Department Sample data. Accessed May 25, 2017.

CHIP offers affordable coverage that is specifically designed to meet the needs of children, including pediatric oral health services. More importantly, CHIP helps working families afford health coverage by capping premiums and cost-sharing to 5 percent of a family's income. As health coverage costs continue to rise, CHIP provides a safety-net for families in every state. Nearly 90 percent of children in CHIP live in families with incomes less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, or \$40,480 for a family of three.³

CHIP was created with bipartisan support to ensure that children in low-income families, families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid but too low to afford private coverage, had access to comprehensive, pediatric-focused health coverage. We strongly urge Congress to reauthorize the program as quickly as possible. States have begun to take action under the assumption that federal funding will cease. Ensuring access to comprehensive coverage and providing continuity of coverage for our nation's low-income children should be a priority.

We look forward to working with Congress on improving access to oral health care for all Americans, including our most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Joseph Crowley D.D.S.
President
American Dental Association

James D. Nickman D.D.S.
President
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

³ CHIP Funding Delay Threatens Children's Health Care, Families USA. Accessed December 6, 2017.
<http://familiesusa.org/initiatives/childrens-health-insurance-program>