

## **Support SCHIP and the Unborn Child Rule**

**Please call your Senators and tell them to support a State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) bill that includes codifying the unborn child rule.**

The Senate is expected to vote on the SCHIP bill the week of October 29.

You may call your Senators through the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121. To find your Senators, go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

### **Action Needed:**

Congress should improve the SCHIP bill and garner strong bipartisan support. The bill can be improved in ways that will strengthen and increase support for SCHIP by making the regulation providing states the option to enroll the unborn child in their SCHIP programs permanent.

A final SCHIP reauthorization should codify the unborn child rule, so states are secure in being able to choose life-affirming health services for needy children and their mothers without involvement in abortion. Without the unborn child option, the only way states could provide prenatal care would be by defining the pregnant woman as the patient in need of "child health assistance." Many children born as U.S. citizens would not receive needed prenatal care because of their mother's immigration status.

The legislation should also maintain and expand coverage, reduce enrollment barriers, and expand outreach. Sufficient funding should be included in order to provide health care coverage to an additional four million more low-income children, reducing the number of uninsured children by nearly half.

### **USCCB Position:**

"As Catholic organizations united by our common faith and committed to the principles of Catholic social teaching, we recognize and affirm the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death and the inherent dignity of every human being. We consider access to adequate health care to be a basic human right, necessary for the development and maintenance of life and for the ability of human beings to realize the fullness of their dignity. A just society is one that protects and promotes fundamental human rights and dignity, with special attention to meeting the basic needs of children and the vulnerable, including the need for safe and affordable health care." (Letter to Senate Budget Committee from USCCB, Catholic Charities USA, and Catholic Health Association, March 15, 2007)

"The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has worked persistently to support and strengthen the nation's vital efforts to provide adequate and affordable health care, especially to the most vulnerable members of our society, our children. We have joined

with Catholic Health Association and Catholic Charities USA to encourage Congress to strengthen, expand and improve the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). We urge the Congress not to turn away from this essential national priority, but to renew its efforts to enact a strong, effective and improved national investment in the health of our children.

...We are convinced the bill can also be improved in ways that will strengthen and increase support for SCHIP. In 2002, the Department of Health and Human Services improved SCHIP by allowing states to interpret the word "child" in the statute to include the period from conception to birth. Twelve states (AR, CA, IL, LA, MA, MI, MN, RI, TN, TX, WA, WI) have already chosen to provide health care to pregnant women and their unborn children under this regulatory option.

Codifying this option will allow states to retain choice and flexibility in how best to provide essential health services to pregnant women and children. Access to prenatal care will allow more children to be born in good health, without a need for more extensive and expensive medical intervention. States will be able to choose improved coverage for unborn children and their mothers, without being required to expand state funding for abortions which would be especially tragic in a program dedicated to the lives and health of children..." (Letter to members of U.S. Congress from Bishop DiMarzio, Chairman of the USCCB Domestic Policy Committee, October 24, 2007)

We urge Congress not to turn away from the effort to reauthorize SCHIP. Congress has a responsibility to support this successful program and improve it by including coverage of the unborn child. Congress should enact a strong, effective, and improved national investment in the health of our children.

### **Background:**

The SCHIP program is now in the process of being reauthorized. Temporary funding for SCHIP has been included in the Continuing Resolution (H.J. Res. 52) that will keep the government running to November 16, 2007. A first bill (H.R. 976) was vetoed by the president, and the veto was sustained. A revised bill (H.R. 3963) was passed by the House on October 25, 2007 by a vote of 265-142. This is not a veto proof majority. It is expected that the Senate will act on the legislation during this week. The president has threatened to veto the revised bill in its current form.

### **Contact:**

Kathy Saile, Director of Domestic Social Development at the USCCB, at 202-541-3134 or [ksaile@usccb.org](mailto:ksaile@usccb.org) or Richard Doerflinger, Deputy Director of Pro-Life Activities at the USCCB, at 202-541-3171 or [rdoerflinger@usccb.org](mailto:rdoerflinger@usccb.org).