

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 16, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
House Majority Leader  
U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC

The Honorable John Boehner  
House Minority Leader  
U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer and Leader Boehner,

As Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, we respectfully request that \$60 billion over five years be included in the fiscal year 2008 budget to support and expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and that \$24 million over five years be included for grants to support community health workers to enroll eligible children. We strongly believe that increased funding for SCHIP should be among the highest priorities in the FY2008 budget.

SCHIP has significantly improved children's access to health care and has made great strides in reducing racial and ethnic disparities. Since 1997, the rate of uninsured Hispanic children decreased by nearly one-third, from 30 percent to 21 percent. Medicaid and SCHIP help children obtain vital services to grow up to be healthy and productive adults. Funding for SCHIP is especially important to communities of color. Forty percent of all Hispanic children are covered by SCHIP or Medicaid, compared to 18 percent of white, non-Hispanic children.

However, there is insufficient federal funding to cover children currently enrolled in SCHIP. Sixty billion over the next five years for SCHIP is needed to cover this shortfall in funding and to expand coverage to eligible but uninsured children. Of the nine million uninsured children, two-thirds are currently eligible for either SCHIP or Medicaid. Five million uninsured children are from communities of color, including 3.5 million Hispanic children. We are deeply concerned that if the budget does not include additional funding to fully address the SCHIP shortfalls and account for growth in the program, many current SCHIP beneficiaries will lose their health care and the unenrolled but eligible children will continue to lack coverage.

SCHIP reauthorization should also address language and cultural barriers, which often pose significant obstacles to enrolling eligible but uninsured children. Consequently, federal support is needed to enroll eligible uninsured children, with an emphasis on linguistic and cultural competence. Community health workers are bilingual, culturally competent professionals who provide a wide array of services, mostly to immigrant populations, such as health education, advocacy, and enrollment in health insurance programs. We request that \$24 million over five years be included in the fiscal year 2008 budget to support community health workers.

As Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus who are committed to children's health care, we believe that the strong reauthorization of SCHIP is needed to continue our nation's great progress in covering more uninsured needy children. We urge that you provide \$60 billion over the next five years for SCHIP in the FY2008 budget resolution to ensure the program's success for minority children and that you include \$24 million over five years for health outreach

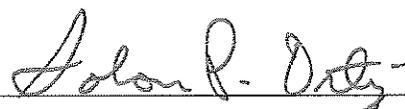
programs. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you on the FY2008 budget and SCHIP reauthorization this year.

Sincerely,

  
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JOE BACA  
Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus

  
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HILDA L. SOLIS  
Chair, CHC Health Task Force

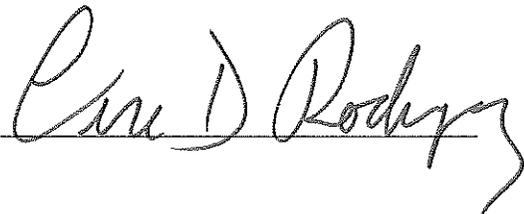
  
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