

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2007

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

As Members of the Congressional TriCaucus, representing the Hispanic, Asian and Black Caucuses, we are deeply concerned that the House-Senate negotiated SCHIP language, as currently reported, fails to include House passed language which would provide states the option to receive federal matching dollars for provision of health services to legal immigrant children. The failure to include this language is a disservice to children in communities of color across our nation. We urge you to reconsider this position and to include flexibility needed by states to ensure legally present immigrant children and pregnant women receive needed care.

As you know, the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) would allow states the option to provide Medicaid and SCHIP coverage to all eligible, legally present, children and pregnant women. Unfortunately, current law bars legally present immigrants in the United States from enrolling in these programs for five years, even if they meet all other eligibility requirements and have no other source of health coverage. This five year bar prevents many children and pregnant women from obtaining essential health care.

More than 20 states, including California, Nebraska, and Texas already use their own funds to provide health care to at least some legally present immigrants who are ineligible for Medicaid or SCHIP because of the five year bar. These states know the importance of ensuring that children and pregnant women have access to care, including the reduction of unnecessary hospitalizations by 22 percent. The U.S. House agreed and included ICHIA in the CHAMP Act, which passed the House on August 1, 2007. This provision has bipartisan support and the support of more than 500 organizations nationwide, including many religious and health care providers.

We believe that to continue to deny health coverage to legally present children and pregnant women is unwise, unnecessary, and immoral. To continue to ignore the needs of legally present children and pregnant women is a disservice to communities of color and to those states which already provide coverage. We strongly urge you to reconsider your position and include flexibility needed by states to ensure children and pregnant women receive needed care.

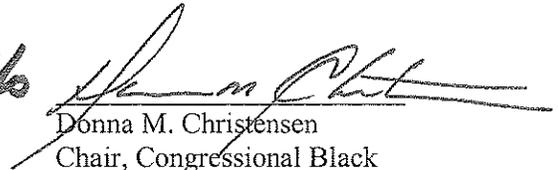
Sincerely,



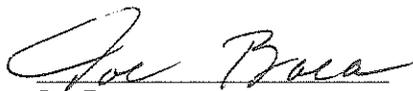
Hilda L. Solis  
Chair, Congressional Hispanic  
Caucus Task Force on Health  
and the Environment



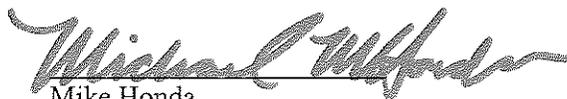
Madeleine Z. Bordallo  
Chair, Congressional Asian  
Pacific American Caucus  
Health Task Force



Donna M. Christensen  
Chair, Congressional Black  
Caucus Health Braintrust



Joe Baca  
Chair, Congressional Hispanic  
Caucus



Mike Honda  
Chair, Congressional Asian  
Pacific American Caucus