



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

December 13, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer, Speaker Ryan, and Leader Pelosi:

We write to you as former Senate Majority Leaders – Republican and Democrat – and as health leaders at the Bipartisan Policy Center to urge your swift action to pass legislation to reauthorize funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Community Health Centers (CHCs) – two vital programs for millions of American families, which share long histories of bipartisan support.

Since enactment of CHIP two decades ago, the rate of uninsured children has fallen to an all-time low of 4.5 percent. And, today, the program – through a productive federal-state partnership – covers 9 million children and pregnant women. Recently, 17 states and the District of Columbia have had to take redistribution grants from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as a last resort to keep their programs going, and another nine states will require this assistance in the coming days and weeks. Some states are beginning to send warning letters to tens of thousands of residents to let them know they will soon run out of funds absent action by Congress.

Meanwhile, CHCs serve more than 27 million patients in rural and urban communities, providing primary and preventive care services to the most vulnerable in our nation. CHCs rely upon the CHC Fund for 70 percent of their federal grant funding. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, the loss of this funding could result in the closing of nearly 3,000 health center sites, the loss of over 50,000 staff and clinician jobs, and the loss of access to care for as many as 9 million patients.

Bipartisan legislation to reauthorize CHIP funding for five years passed the Senate Finance Committee. And similar legislation passed in the House of Representatives that would also extend funding for CHCs.

We commend your hard work and attention to this important issue, and understand Members of Congress and their staff are working diligently to craft a suitable package that can garner the necessary votes needed for passage. We urge you to complete action on this legislation as soon as possible before the end of the year to provide certainty to states and peace of mind for the millions of families and their children depending on your leadership.

Sincerely,

William Frist, M.D.

Tom Daschle

Cc: Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch and Ranking Member Ron Wyden; House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden and Ranking Member Frank Pallone; Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Chairman Lamar Alexander and Ranking Member Patty Murray