May 7, 2012

Dear Representative:

The undersigned organizations urge you to oppose efforts to remove incentives for states to find and enroll eligible low-income children into Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

Recent reports from the National Center for Health Statistics show that an additional 1.2 million children have gained coverage in the last three years because of the enrollment policies contained in the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA). CHIPRA established performance incentives to reward states for demonstrating concrete success in enrolling low-income uninsured children in Medicaid and CHIP. The funding encourages states to take proven steps that simplify Medicaid and CHIP enrollment and renewal procedures.

To date, the incentive payments have worked exactly as intended, rewarding states for tackling the challenge of making sure that the lowest-income children are connected to the coverage for which they are eligible. In December 2010, 16 states received awards. In December 2011, 23 states received awards.

The policies that allow states to qualify for incentive payments have a long-term positive impact on access to coverage and attachment to a medical home for children. They encourage the efficient use of state and federal funds as opposed to policies that cost more than they save (as has been proven by Medicaid and CHIP’s history with citizenship documentation policies). To cut the incentive program - which provides critical funding to states that are clearly still experiencing budget crises - is shortsighted. It could imperil the nation’s recent success in driving the uninsured rate of children to record lows. Cuts to children’s Medicaid and CHIP coverage are also unpopular, as the vast majority of working families - 93% - are satisfied with their child’s coverage in these programs.

Medicaid and CHIP are low-cost, efficient ways to provide health coverage and health care to children. Compared to children with insurance, uninsured children are over five times more likely to have an unmet need for medical care; over three times more likely not to get a needed prescription drug; much less likely to receive preventive services including immunizations, dental, and vision care and medical care for conditions such as sore throats, ear infections and asthma; and 30% less likely to receive medical treatment if they are injured.

Connecting the poorest children with affordable health care coverage is the primary goal of the CHIPRA performance incentives. Eliminating them would contradict the objective of making coverage of the poorest children a top priority while at the same time wasting taxpayer dollars by making Medicaid and CHIP less efficient. We urge you to oppose cuts to the CHIPRA incentive program.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Alliance for a Just Society
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Pediatric Society
American Public Health Association
Ascension Health
Association for Community Affiliated Plans
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Campaign for Better Health Care, Illinois
Cedar River Group
Center for Budget and Policy Priorities
Center for Rural Affairs, Nebraska
Children's Alliance
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Dental Health Project
Children's Health Fund
Children's Hospital Association
Children's Partnership
Clinical Social Work Association
Colorado Consumer Health Initiative
Colorado School Medicaid Consortium
Community Catalyst, New England Alliance for Children’s Health
Community Health Network of Washington
Consumer Action
Defeat Diabetes Foundation
Doctors for America
Doctors for America, Washington state chapter
Doctors for Global Health
Easter Seals
Every Child Matters Education Fund
Families USA
Florida CHAIN
Florida Child Healthcare Coalition
Health & Disability Advocates
Health Care for All-Washington
HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition
International Community Health Services
League of Women Voters of Washington
Legal Voice
Legal Voice in Washington State
Leyden Area Special Education Cooperative
March of Dimes
Maryland Citizens’ Health Initiative
Medicaid Health Plans of America
Medicaid in Schools
Mental Health America
Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network
National Academies of Practice
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Assembly on School-Based Health Care
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Counties
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Council of Jewish Women
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Physician’s Alliance
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New Mexico Voices for Children
NYS Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
Occupational Training Institute
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Pennsylvania Health Law Project
Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
RESULTS
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Seattle Indian Health Board
SEIU Healthcare 1199NW
Single Payer Action Network (SPAN) Ohio
Society for Pediatric Research
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Temple Beth Am Health Care For All
Tennessee Health Care Campaign
Texans Care for Children
The Children's Movement of Florida
Utah Health Policy Project
Vermont Public Interest Research Group
Voices for America's Children
Washington Community Action Network
Washington State Hospital Association
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Washington State Nurses Association