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Statement of the National Children's Health Community Urging Quick Bipartisan Action on a Strong, Five-Year Extension of Funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program

August 3, 2017

As our nation marks the 20th anniversary of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) this week, our organizations call **on Congress to take immediate action to enact a five-year extension of CHIP funding**. Since its inception in 1997, CHIP, together with Medicaid, has helped to reduce the numbers of uninsured children by a remarkable 68 percent. With CHIP funding set to expire on September 30, 2017, now is the time for Congress to stabilize the CHIP funding stream and protect the gains in children's health coverage that have resulted in more than 95 percent of all children in America being enrolled in some form of insurance coverage.

CHIP has a proven track record of providing high-quality, cost-effective coverage for low-income children and pregnant women in working families. CHIP was a smart, bipartisan solution to a real problem facing American children and families when it was adopted in 1997 and its importance and impact in securing a healthy future for children in low-income families has only increased. Senators, representatives, and governors all recognize the importance of CHIP in providing affordable, pediatric-specific coverage to almost 9 million children who cannot afford private coverage or lack access to employer-based coverage. CHIP also delivers quality, affordable care to pregnant women in 19 states, allowing them to obtain the care they need to have healthy pregnancies and give birth to healthy infants.

With federal CHIP funding set to end on September 30, 2017, states are facing critical decisions about the future of their CHIP programs. Many states are just weeks away from setting in motion processes to establish waiting lists and send out disenrollment notices to families. Once undertaken, these actions will have an immediate effect, creating chaos in program administration and confusion for families.

Extending CHIP is particularly important in light of the ongoing debate on and uncertainty regarding the future of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicaid, and the stability of the individual insurance markets. With state budgets already set for the coming year, states are counting on CHIP to continue in its current form. Changes to CHIP's structure – including

changes to the Maintenance of Effort or the enhanced CHIP matching rate – would cause significant disruption in children’s coverage and leave states with critical shortfalls in their budgets. Given CHIP’s track record of success, changes to CHIP that would cause harm to children must not be made.

Today, we stand united in urging Congress to honor CHIP’s 20 years of success by securing this critical source of coverage for children and pregnant women into the future. As Congress continues to work on larger health system reforms, a primary goal should be to improve health coverage for children, but at a minimum, no child should be left worse off. We urge our nation’s leaders to work together to enact a five-year extension of CHIP funding as an important opportunity for meaningful, bipartisan action.

Contact:

Ari Goldberg, VP Communications, First Focus, 240-678-9102; agoldberg@firstfocus.org

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