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## **Statement of Leading Children's Health, Medical and Advocacy Organizations: Congress' Failure to Include a Strong Five-Year Extension of CHIP on This Week's Spending Bill is a Missed Opportunity to Protect Children and Families**

As advocates for children and pregnant women, we call on Congress to immediately enact a long-term extension of funding for the popular Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). We are deeply distressed by Congress' failure to take timely action. Funding for CHIP is now 68 days past its September 30 deadline, and the families of the 9 million children and over 370,000 pregnant women who rely on the program continue to face an uncertain future. It is shameful that Congress is poised to miss yet another opportunity to include a strong five-year extension of CHIP, as supported by both the House and Senate, with the Continuing Resolution (CR) this week. Instead, the CR is likely to include only a short-term technical adjustment to provide stopgap measure to just a handful of states which falls far short of the long-term solution states and our nation's children need.

While we appreciate that Congress is including the stopgap measure and recognizes the imminent harm children are facing, serious risks to children will continue. States will use their limited staff time and resources developing contingency plans and notices to families. As more states send out notices, more families will become confused and it becomes increasingly likely that some children will miss doctor appointments or go without medication, or that some pregnant women will go without prenatal care.

While Congress professes to be supportive of CHIP, the delay in long-term funding for CHIP is sending a different message to families and states. Confidence in the program's future cannot be restored with stopgap measures, and these Congressional delays jeopardize the long-term stability of this lifeline for children. It is no longer sufficient to offer vague promises of future action, nor is it desirable or sustainable to continue offering patchwork short-term repairs. Congress must act NOW to enact the strong five-year extension of CHIP as supported by both the House and Senate, free of harmful offsets, to avoid compounding the damage already done in states and to children and families.

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