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December 13, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan
and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the 16,000 members of the American Thoracic Society (ATS), I am writing to urge you to enact legislation to provide a five-year funding extension for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) before the end of 2017. As a medical membership society that includes pediatric pulmonologists, critical care and sleep specialists, we are deeply concerned about the 9 million children, 370,000 pregnant women and their families who are reliant on the CHIP program for their health care.

CHIP beneficiaries include children and pregnant women with asthma and other chronic health conditions that need access to continuous affordable health coverage, including maintenance medications. Without timely access to medically necessary care provided through CHIP, some children and pregnant women with chronic conditions will not receive adequate care, which will result in them getting sicker, unable to attend school and work, and incurring higher health care costs including hospitalizations.

While Congress included a stopgap measure in the December continuing resolution that will assist some states in the short-term, this measure falls far short of the long-term stable funding that states need to continue operating their CHIP programs. States including CA, CO, OR and MN are already running out of funds to operate their CHIP program and are being forced to send notices to families advising them that their coverage may be ending within a few months, which will create confusion for families and likely result in some children missing physician appointments or going without needed medications. Congress's inaction is harming the health of 9 million children.



The ATS urges Congress to act now to enact a five-year extension of CHIP, free of harmful financial offsets, to ensure access to health care for children, pregnant women and families.

Sincerely,



Marc Moss, M.D.
President
American Thoracic Society



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