



KATE BROWN
Governor

November 14, 2017

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Wyden and Merkley:

I am writing to update you on the status of Oregon's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). As you know, funding for this vital federal program expired September 30th of this year, and new analysis reveals how congressional inaction particularly hurts our state. CHIP previously passed with broad bipartisan support, but is now caught up in political gamesmanship. Children's access to health care should not be toyed with. I applaud your efforts to find a CHIP solution, and I urge you to redouble your efforts with your Republican colleagues to see it resolved before Oregon incurs more damage.

For decades, Oregon policymakers have worked tirelessly to advocate for children's access to health care. The years of advocacy and toil have proven successful in that today 98 percent of all Oregon children are covered by health insurance. A key component of our commitment to Oregon's youngest is our partnership with the federal government to provide this care through CHIP. The recent failure to reauthorize CHIP puts at risk the health care of 80,000 Oregon children and pregnant women. I find this unacceptable.

While analysis by national policy outlets shows that Oregon funding does not run out until January 2018, the Oregon Health Authority has recently informed me that our state's federal funding for this program will be exhausted in December. Oregon covers children and families of modest incomes, and CHIP enrollment has increased nearly 10% since April. In the months to come, dozens of other states and Oregon will be severely impacted if Congress does not act to reauthorize funding for CHIP.

I believe Oregon families should be confident that their children's health care is beyond political wrangling. At a time when the country is deeply divided politically, I believe our federal leaders have an opportunity to demonstrate unity by supporting this program's reauthorization without risking the survival of another. We should agree that the debate about children's access to health care is over, and work to reauthorize this longstanding, bipartisan program so Oregon children and their families can thrive.

As vice-chair of the National Governors Association Health and Human Services Committee, I will continue reaching out to my fellow governors to work with them in urging your colleagues to support CHIP reauthorization. It is too important to delay.



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I am grateful for your strong leadership towards a bipartisan CHIP solution. I eagerly await updates of your hard work on this issue on behalf of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Brown', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Governor Kate Brown

Cc:

Representative Earl Blumenauer
Representative Suzanne Bonamici
Representative Peter DeFazio
Representative Kurt Schrader
Representative Greg Walden