

# American Academy of Pediatrics



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**For Release:** July 25, 2007  
10 am (ET)

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## **PEDIATRICIANS CONTINUE CALL FOR A STRONG STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION**

**Washington, DC---**The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) joined 30 other national organizations today to urge Congress to pass a strong reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), and to unite in opposition to the veto threats issued by the Bush administration.

"Every infant, child, adolescent, and young adult in this country deserves access to quality and comprehensive health care," said Robert Zarr, MD, MPH, on behalf of the AAP during a press conference this morning. "Without SCHIP, millions of America's children would be left uninsured, and without appropriate and timely medical attention. As we are about 2 months away from SCHIP expiring, and abandoning these children, we are currently in a moment of crisis. We need to act responsibly to support expanding not cutting SCHIP funding."

The AAP supports the Senate Finance Committee bill on SCHIP but would like the Senate to make a couple of improvements when there is a Senate floor vote. First, the AAP wants at least \$50 billion in new federal funding to enroll more eligible but unenrolled children. Second, fair physician payment is needed. Access to care is affected when families can't find a doctor who accepts SCHIP or Medicaid. The AAP is still reviewing the just released House SCHIP bill, but we are encouraged with its funding level.

As the administration tries to squelch health care coverage for children of working parents with its veto threats, it has used "crowd out" as one of the reasons. Crowd out is when families drop private insurance coverage to go on a public program that is less expensive.

"Crowd them out of what? These families are uninsured. This is not a competition between private and public insurance. SCHIP helps working families who aren't offered insurance coverage through their employer or if it is offered, it's so expensive the families can't afford it," Dr. Zarr said. "SCHIP and Medicaid are the only options for millions of families to cover their children. By supporting SCHIP, we are positively affecting the lives and well being of our country's most precious resource, our children."

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.*