



News Release

For Immediate Release: December 21, 2005

Contact: Marjorie Tharp
Priscilla Ring
202-347-8600

**Press Statement
on
CUTTING MEDICAID AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE
by
Eileen M. Ouellette, MD, JD, AAP President**

“Today, the U.S. Senate narrowly passed (51-50) a budget reconciliation bill that would save money in part by charging children fees for their health care coverage through the Medicaid program. States could impose cost sharing for some children on Medicaid, as well as cut children’s services that are currently guaranteed. That’s just plain wrong.

“Pediatricians and other child advocates still have a chance to prevent this legislation from becoming law. Because the Senate had some minor changes, this bill has to go back to the U.S. House of Representatives for another vote. The House passed a similar bill by a 212-206 vote on Dec. 19.

“A \$3 co-pay for one prescription may not sound like a lot, but for children with asthma or diabetes, for example, each prescription adds up quickly. Through the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit, children receive medically necessary care. With this bill, states would have the option of denying those benefits, like physical therapy and mental health services. States could end up paying to screen for problems, but not cover the treatment.

“The Family Opportunity Act, which the American Academy of Pediatrics endorsed, is also included in the bill. It would give states the option of allowing higher income families with severely disabled children to buy-in to the Medicaid program for health coverage. We’re pleased it’s included, but if the overall Medicaid changes are approved, the services won’t be as comprehensive as needed or easily accessible.

“The American Academy of Pediatrics and its members will work to secure the votes needed to defeat the bill in the House. The health of our patients is paramount. Medicaid is far too important in providing health care coverage to millions of children to be threatened in this way.”

###

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.