

FIRST FOCUS: CHILDREN'S HEALTH

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization that is committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. Children's health, education, family economics, child welfare, and child safety are the five core issue areas around which First Focus is working to promote bipartisan policy solutions.



We all win when kids get the care they need. When an asthmatic child can get regular treatment, she is less likely to need emergency room care for an attack. That helps to keep her in school and her parents at work, and it helps taxpayers avoid the high cost of emergency care. First Focus believes that reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), strengthening the Healthy Start Program, and combating childhood obesity are critical steps to improving children's health.

STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (SCHIP)

To get reliable health care, kids need reliable health coverage. SCHIP, in partnership with Medicaid, has reduced the number of uninsured children by one-third since 1997. But there are still nine million American kids without coverage.

Throughout the 2007 debate on Capitol Hill to reauthorize SCHIP, First Focus supported bipartisan legislation, including the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) (H.R. 976, H.R. 3963), to expand and improve the SCHIP program. First Focus' leading priorities for reauthorization include:

- ◆ **Fully funding SCHIP** and ensuring that, at a minimum, no child who currently has coverage should lose it as a result of SCHIP reauthorization. Reauthorization also should provide the additional resources necessary to ensure that more of our nation's uninsured children – especially those who are already eligible for SCHIP or Medicaid – get coverage.
- ◆ **Enrolling more children** by providing states with the resources and tools, including expedited enrollment processes like Express Lane Eligibility and community-based outreach grants, to improve enrollment of eligible kids in Medicaid or SCHIP.
- ◆ **Improving services and coverage.** By improving coverage for dental and mental health services, as well as coverage for pregnant women and legal immigrant children and also addressing concerns regarding citizenship documentation requirements that have been hindering the enrollment of eligible children.

HEALTHY START

Healthy Start seeks to reduce infant mortality and improve early childhood health. Healthy Start projects – which are up and running in nearly 100 communities in 36 states -- have proven successful, but real challenges remain – for example, infant mortality actually increased in 2002.

With Healthy Start resources already stretched thin, it is essential that the funding that is provided for Healthy Start is sufficient to maintain current services and reach more pregnant women and newborns nationwide. First Focus strongly supports bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Health Start program, (S. 1760, H.R. 3267).

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

More than one in three American children and adolescents is either obese or at risk of becoming obese. First Focus believes we can and must combat what the federal Institute of Medicine has called a “public health crisis” by:

- ◆ **Improving nutritional standards in schools.** Extend USDA's authority to cover all foods served in schools. In addition, all school meals should be required to meet U.S. dietary guidelines.
- ◆ **Incorporate nutrition education into existing federal food programs.** Congress should increase funding for nutrition education in USDA-administered nutrition programs that target low-income, at-risk populations such as Food Stamps and the school lunch program.
- ◆ **Providing funding for childhood obesity prevention.** Congress should restore funding to the Centers for Disease Control and programs like VERB which have proven effective in helping to reduce childhood obesity.



FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY