

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



P.O. Box 94004
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9004
(225) 342-7015
GOV.LA.GOV

December 6, 2017

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
United States Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Kennedy
United States Senate
SRB11, Russell Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
United States House of Representatives
2338 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cedric Richmond
United States House of Representatives
240 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Clay Higgins
United States House of Representatives
1711 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Johnson
United States House of Representatives
327 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ralph Abraham
United States House of Representatives
417 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Garret Graves
United States House of Representatives
430 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators and Congressmen:

Louisiana's Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP) is a fundamental element of health care access for our state's children. Alarming, Congress recently missed a deadline to reauthorize this critical program which, over time, could put these vulnerable Louisianans at risk. I write to advise you of the profound impact the CHIP program has had on Louisiana and the clear reasons why it must be reauthorized as soon as possible.

LaCHIP now covers more than 122,000 Louisiana children with a full spectrum of care. Thanks to LaCHIP, we are proud to boast of one of the lowest uninsured rates among children in the nation. Consequently, since 2003 Louisiana's rate of uninsured children fell from 11.1 percent to just 3.8 percent in 2015.

Further, LaCHIP provides access to high quality health care services for these children. Studies indicate LaCHIP members – who largely come from families below 217 percent of the Federal Poverty Line - have similar rates of access to health care as children insured in employer-sponsored private coverage.¹ This point is as astonishing as it is important: CHIP-enrolled children look in almost every way identical to uninsured children in social determinants, but the outcomes we see are in almost every measurable health-related way more similar to high-income, high socioeconomic status insured children. The sole difference is CHIP coverage.

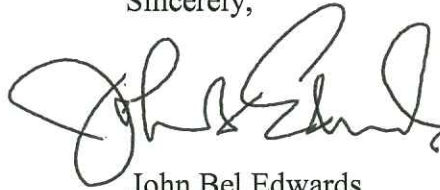
Indeed, these benefits are passed on to the state in later years – children with strong access to care early in life are less likely to need care as they reach adulthood, more likely to thrive and not need social services as adults, and more likely to develop good habits when they do access care.²

Current estimates indicate that without reauthorization, Louisiana will run out of federal funding for LaCHIP in January of 2018. Beginning in January, Louisiana taxpayers would need to shoulder at least an additional \$126 million per year to maintain the program through 2019. With dire budget problems at our doorstep, we would be hard-pressed to maintain current levels of health care access for these vulnerable children.

Not only does LaCHIP improve the health of our children and limit financial burdens on working families, it also acts as a financial backstop for numerous Louisiana providers and a significant benefit to Louisiana's beleaguered state budget. Over the past 18 months, for instance, more than \$492 million of overall payments to Louisiana providers originated from services provided to CHIP recipients.

This program is of utmost importance to our Louisiana families and I implore you to act quickly to reauthorize it. Caring for Louisiana's vulnerable children and giving them a healthy start at life pays enormous dividends for the health of our state. Please help us continue this good work.

Sincerely,



John Bel Edwards
Governor

¹ MACPAC Contractor Report, pgs. 7-14: https://www.macpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Contractor-Report-No_1.pdf

² Georgetown University Health Policy Institute: <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Dismantling-CHIP-in-Arizona.pdf>