

Sonny Perdue
Georgia

Frank Murkowski
Alaska

Tom Vilsack
Iowa

Kathleen Blanco
Louisiana

Robert Ehrlich
Maryland

Mitt Romney
Massachusetts

Haley Barbour
Mississippi

Jon Corzine
New Jersey

Mike Easley
North Carolina

Donald Carcieri
Rhode Island

Michael Rounds
South Dakota

Jim Doyle
Wisconsin

September 19, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing today regarding a vital issue that could derail one of the most popular and forward looking Federal-State partnerships just as we are approaching the ten year anniversary of its creation. If Congress does not move to address funding shortfalls in the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) this fall, our states are facing harsh decisions in order to maintain the program through fiscal year 2007 and beyond. We are asking for your assistance in working with Congress to address the issue.

As you know, the State Children's Health Insurance Program was a bipartisan approach to address the growing number of children without health insurance. When Congress authorized the program in 1997, the intent was to expand health insurance coverage to children whose families earned too much money to be eligible for Medicaid but were unable to afford private coverage. Each state was able to use flexibilities inherent in the authorization to design programs specific to the unique circumstances and needs of children in that individual state. Nearly ten years later every state in the nation and Puerto Rico has a version of the program and nationally the program provides health benefits for over 6.1 million children.

While we consider SCHIP a great success, there are long-term funding allocation issues that must be addressed in the reauthorization process, as well as short-term funding issues for FY 2007. According to the Congressional Research Service, forty states will spend more than their SCHIP allotment next year and eighteen of those states will be facing program shortfalls. Congress must address the short-term funding shortfall, or states will be forced to drop children from their programs or move SCHIP eligible children into already stretched-thin Medicaid programs. We ask for your leadership and assistance in working with Congress to strengthen and preserve a successful program that meets the needs of our children.

Thank you for your time and assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely,




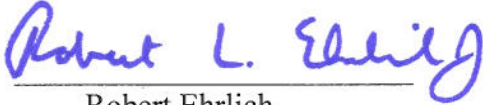
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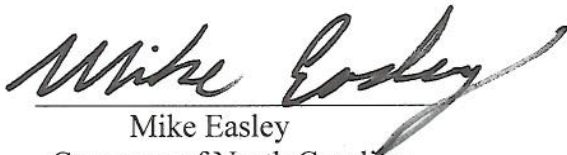

Kathleen Blanco
Governor of Louisiana

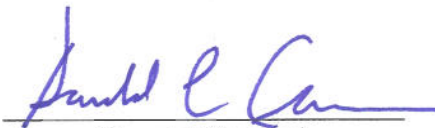

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