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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of our physician and medical student members, the American Medical Association (AMA) strongly urges Congress to reauthorize funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) prior to recessing for the holidays.

CHIP addresses a critical gap in health coverage for children in low-income working families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford private insurance on their own. Over the past two decades, CHIP has been successful in significantly reducing the number and percentage of children without health insurance coverage.

Since federal funding for this program expired on September 30, several states have already sent or will soon be sending notices to their CHIP beneficiaries informing them that their coverage may soon be terminated. This situation has already created unnecessary anxiety for beneficiaries, their parents, and physicians. Should Congress fail to reauthorize CHIP, the nine million low-income children and thousands of pregnant women who rely on this program may experience grave health consequences. And many of these working families will face financial difficulties as they are forced to seek alternative, private coverage.

While we appreciate that last week's continuing resolution contained a special rule to help states facing emergency shortfalls temporarily gain access to "redistribution" funds left over from previous fiscal years, Congress must immediately find a more durable, long-term solution that includes at least five years of funding. This will enable states to properly budget for coming years, and bring comfort and certainty to worried mothers and fathers across the nation. It is therefore imperative that Congress act to reauthorize CHIP prior to recessing so that millions of families are not left to face the holidays with the fear that the health insurance coverage they rely on to keep their children healthy will be stripped away in the new year. We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD