

On behalf of the (# of members) primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists who are members of the (STATE) Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, I urge you to prioritize the unique needs of children in health care reform.

As a nation, we have made progress in improving children's health, but there is much more we must do to reform our nation's health care system. With close to 9 million children still uninsured, an infant mortality rate worse than 23 other industrialized nations, and intolerable racial disparities in health care, our country has significant work ahead. Health care reform is imperative if we are to succeed in ensuring that all children have access to the services they need and deserve. Specifically, the AAP urges you to focus on the following issues:

Access: All Children Must Have Access to Coverage

- Any mandate for health insurance coverage must require that all children have health insurance.
- Medicaid payment rates should be raised to parity with Medicare rates, as currently proposed in the House bill.
- Incentives must be provided to bolster the pediatric subspecialty workforce, which currently suffers from major shortages. AAP supports the pediatric workforce grants proposed in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP) Committee's draft legislation.

Benefits: All Children Should Have Benefits That Meet Their Unique Needs

- Children should have coverage for comprehensive well-child services and immunizations without cost sharing and copays, as defined by the Senate HELP Committee draft legislation.
- All health plans offered through a new "gateway" or "exchange" structure should be required to cover maternity and pediatric services, as proposed by the Senate Finance Committee.
- All medically necessary services for children should be exempt from any newly established benefits advisory body such as the "Medical Advisory Council" or Health Benefits Council proposed in the current draft bills.

Quality: Children Deserve High Quality Care

- All children should have a medical home. The AAP strongly supports the Medicaid medical home demonstration project proposed in the House bill.
- Specific attention must be paid to pediatric quality measurement; measures designed for Medicare patients will not work for children.

A focus on children is the foundation of a health system that works. An investment in our children is an investment in our future, and investing in well child and developmental services early in life can prevent costly chronic conditions and lead to long term cost savings. In today's economic environment there is no better way to control costs than to invest early in a healthy citizenry. The life success of every child should be our highest national priority.

We look forward to working with you toward final passage of a comprehensive measure that meets the needs of the (STATE)'s children.

Sincerely,

President (CHAPTER)