



**Protecting Children's Coverage:  
An Advocacy Toolkit for AAP Members, Leaders and Chapters  
Spring 2017**

The following resources will help equip pediatricians to advocate to protect children's health care coverage as reforms are being debated and considered by Congress. This document and all accompanying resources will be kept up-to-date and can be accessed on [federaladvocacy.aap.org](http://federaladvocacy.aap.org). Please bookmark this page and refer to it there as the landscape continues to evolve.

Please coordinate your advocacy activities with your Chapter leaders and executive director. We all need to stay in the boat!

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**Resources to Reference (external links)**

- AAP [letter](#) to House leadership opposing the American Health Care Act
- [State fact sheets](#) summarizing children's coverage with state-specific data
- Breakdown of [data by Congressional district](#) and by age of children enrolled in Medicaid/CHIP, as well as a [map showing the numbers of children](#) on Medicaid/CHIP by state. You can filter just the state/district you need to pull from for any advocacy materials.
- [Information](#) for AAP Chapters on how to use the WebCMS tool to match chapter members with their Congressional delegations
- Primary Care Organizations (AAP, AAFP, ACP, ACOG, AOA) [joint principles](#) for health reform, [joint statement](#) supporting protecting patients' access to care and [joint statement](#) opposing the process to consider the American Health Care Act

- [Letter-to-the-Editor](#) by Dan Levy, MD, FAAP, and Ankoor Shah, MD, FAAP, in the Washington Post opposing the American Health Care Act
  - An [op-ed](#) from AAP Nebraska Chapter Executive Director Dawn Hovey and Executive Director of Voices for Children in Nebraska Aubrey Mancuso on protecting children's health programs
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## Opportunities to Take Action

There are several opportunities to take action this spring in support of protecting children's coverage.

### ACA Anniversary: March 23

The U.S. House of Representatives has indicated its intention to vote to pass the American Health Care Act on the anniversary of the Affordable Care Act's passage, which was March 23, 2010. Please consider using that opportunity to publish op-eds, blogs or letters-to-the-editor reflecting on the gains in children's coverage and urging Congress not to undo the progress made.

- A hashtag has not been set up yet so please use #KeepKidsCovered and #Docs4Coverage in your posts
- Here are a couple of messages to get you started:
  - On the anniversary of the #ACA, let's not roll back the gains we've made for children. Congress must #KeepKidsCovered!
  - On the #ACA anniversary, the American Health Care Act will not #KeepKidsCovered. @AmerAcadPeds letter on why: <http://ow.ly/xqWo309Ujil>

### Doctors' Day: March 30

March 30<sup>th</sup> is National Doctors Day. Using #NationalDoctorsDay, consider sharing photos of yourself and your colleagues at work, and/or advocating on behalf of your patients. It is also a good opportunity to reach out to your federal legislators to set up recess appointments for April (see below). Here are a couple of sample social media posts for your consideration:

- On #NationalDoctorsDay, I stand with @AmerAcadPeds with one message for Congress: #KeepKidsCovered. (insert photo of you from the fly-in or with other colleagues advocating or working to care for children)
- On #NationalDoctorsDay and every day, I speak up for the children I care for. Let's protect children's coverage and #KeepKidsCovered.

### Congressional Recess: April 10-21

During the weeks of April 10<sup>th</sup> and April 17<sup>th</sup>, members of Congress will be in their hometowns and states meeting with constituents. Take the opportunity to attend a town hall or meet with your federal legislators in person to urge them to protect children's coverage.

If you want to reach out proactively to offer yourself as a resource for any public event in support of children's health care, or to offer a tour of your clinic or institution to your federal official, now is the time to do so.

Here is the directory for [U.S. Representatives](#) and here is the directory for [U.S. Senators](#).

### Ongoing: Share your Patient Stories

If you have a patient impact story about Medicaid or access to health care coverage generally that would be adversely affected by the efforts currently developing in Congress, please share the following information with [kids1st@aap.org](mailto:kids1st@aap.org) with "Health Care Coverage Patient Story" in the subject line:

- Your name, title, and role within AAP
- Your institution, city and state
- A brief summary of an experience you had with a family, including:

- No personal medical information that would violate HIPPA (feel free to change personal details in order to comply)
  - Vivid details about the patient’s condition/family’s experience, including any humanizing details about your interactions/observations
  - A specific reference to the federal policy protection or barrier (access to care within Medicaid, etc.)
  - An ask of how to protect that benefit or address that barrier
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## Template Letter for Chapters to Customize and Send to U.S. Representatives Opposing the American Health Care Act

[CHAPTER LOGO]

March \_\_, 2017

The Honorable [REPRESENTATIVE NAME [SEE CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTORY](#)]  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative [REPRESENTATIVE NAME]:

On behalf of the [CHAPTER NAME], a non-profit professional organization of [NUMBER OF MEMBERS] [STATE NAME] primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I write to offer comments on the American Health Care Act (AHCA) currently under consideration by Congress.

Today, the number of children with health insurance in [STATE NAME] is at an historic high of [\[DATA FROM STATE FACT SHEET\]](#) percent. These recent gains are the result of Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As Congress began considering changes to the ACA and Medicaid, the message from [STATE NAME] pediatricians was clear: any changes to the ACA cannot erode the progress we have made in reducing child uninsurance in our state. Unfortunately, the AHCA does not meet this test and the [CHAPTER NAME] opposes it as currently drafted.

Medicaid has been a crucial source of health care coverage for children for over 50 years. Today, approximately 36 million children nationwide rely on Medicaid for their care each year. AHCA would end the federal government’s commitment to state Medicaid programs as we know it. The [CHAPTER NAME] opposes per capita caps and other mechanisms that would dramatically shift costs to states and seriously jeopardize the comprehensive benefits offered to children through the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) standard. Per capita caps would degrade the quality of care offered in the Medicaid program and would hinder the ability of states to respond to public health crises and other fluctuations in health care costs and the need for services. Moreover, per capita caps have the potential to significantly impact children with special health care needs, who might require resources beyond their annual allotment. This upending of the structure of Medicaid financing will ultimately lead to reductions in enrollment, cuts to benefits, higher costs for low-income families and decreased access to physicians.

The proposal also makes other concerning changes to the Medicaid program. The bill phases out an ACA provision that moved more than half a million children from low-income families into Medicaid, offering these children guaranteed eligibility for coverage and comprehensive benefits under EPSDT. Eliminating this provision will likely result in children of different ages within a single family receiving coverage from different

programs, which is unnecessarily confusing and burdensome for vulnerable families. In addition, the elimination of the ACA Medicaid expansion will also increase uninsurance among young adults and parents, negatively impacting family health and stability. Finally, the AHCA would interfere with the ability of patients to choose their preferred providers in the Medicaid program based on criteria unrelated to their qualifications.

AHCA does maintain important patient protections from the ACA such as dependent coverage up to age 26, the ban on pre-existing conditions exclusions, mandated coverage of essential health benefits including pediatric services, and no cost-sharing for preventive services such as vaccinations and well-child visits. However, for families who must purchase insurance in the individual market, the AHCA will make coverage less affordable by eliminating support for cost-sharing reductions and offering less generous tax credits not adjusted to account for a family's financial need. Over a million children receive their coverage through the marketplaces established under the ACA, and many of these families will be unable to purchase insurance without the financial supports offered by the ACA.

Please keep the needs of [STATE NAME]'s children at the forefront as you consider changes to our health care system. We urge you to reconsider moving forward with proposals that will move health coverage for children backward. The [CHAPTER NAME] stands ready to work you and others in Congress to ensure that health care for children is protected and strengthened.

Sincerely,

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## Template Email to Members of Congress: Protect Gains in Children's Health Care Coverage

Visit [federaladvocacy.aap.org](http://federaladvocacy.aap.org) for the latest background information, emails and talking points on this issue.

Dear Rep. **REPRESENTATIVE NAME** [SEE CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTORY](#):

As a pediatrician, a constituent and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics [CHAPTER/COMMITTEE/COUNCIL/SECTION NAME], I am writing to oppose the American Health Care Act. I urge you to preserve the gains made in children's health care coverage and ensure this coverage is comprehensive, affordable and accessible for children and families.

Today, the number of children with health insurance in [STATE NAME] is at an historic high of [\[DATA FROM STATE FACT SHEET\]](#) percent. This progress was made possible by Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program and the Affordable Care Act working together.

As a pediatrician, I am deeply concerned with using per capita caps to fund the Medicaid program, which would shift costs to states and likely lead to enrollment cuts, meaning less coverage for those who need it most, children with special health care needs and low-income families.

Children are not just little adults; they have unique health needs, and access to affordable, high-quality health coverage is essential to keeping children of all ages healthy. Through Medicaid, children are guaranteed benefits that cover a comprehensive array of medically necessary services, including developmental, vision and hearing screenings.

Any efforts that rollback this progress, increase the cost of insurance or increase the number of uninsured would jeopardize children's health.

Please keep the needs of America's children at the forefront as you consider changes to our health care system. I urge you to reconsider moving forward with proposals that will move health coverage for children backward.

Thank you for all you do for children in our state and across the country.

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## Template Talking Points: Protect Gains in Children's Health Care Coverage

The U.S. House of Representatives is considering the American Health Care Act, which would repeal much of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and make drastic changes to Medicaid, directly impacting children and families. The AAP [opposes the bill](#) for failing to preserve the gains made in children's coverage.

Please use the talking points below to call your U.S. representative and urge him or her to preserve gains in children's health care. Feel free to incorporate [data from your state](#):

- As a pediatrician and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics, I am calling to oppose the American Health Care Act. I urge you to preserve the gains made in children's health care coverage and ensure this coverage is comprehensive, affordable and accessible for children and families.
- The coverage rate among children in the United States is at a historic high: 95 percent. This progress was made possible by Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program and the Affordable Care Act working together.
- I am deeply concerned with using per capita caps to fund the Medicaid program, which would shift costs to states and likely lead to enrollment cuts, meaning less coverage for those who need it most, children with special health care needs and low-income families.
- Medicaid matters for children across the country. Through Medicaid, children are guaranteed benefits that cover a comprehensive array of medically necessary services, including developmental, vision and hearing screenings. These benefits are viewed by pediatricians as the gold standard of preventive care for children.
- Any efforts that rollback this progress, increase the cost of insurance or increase the number of uninsured would jeopardize children's health.
- Please keep the needs of America's children at the forefront as you consider changes to our health care system. I urge you to vote no on the American Health Care Act. Please reconsider moving forward with proposals that will move health coverage for children backward.
- Thank you for all you do for children in our state and across the country.

*If talking to a congressional office that **opposed the AHCA**:*

- Thank you for speaking up against the AHCA. We are at a historic high for insurance coverage for children – 95% - and the AHCA would take us backward. Please continue to oppose the AHCA.

*If talking to a congressional office that **supported the AHCA**:*

- Please help us preserve the gains in children's health care coverage. Please reconsider moving forward with proposals that will move health coverage for children backward.

*If talking to a congressional office whose **position is unknown on the AHCA**:*

- Please help us preserve the gains in children's health care coverage. We must ensure this coverage is comprehensive, affordable and accessible for children and families. I strongly urge you to oppose the AHCA, and to vote against it.

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Sample social media messages and graphics: [#Docs4Coverage](#) and [#KeepKidsCovered](#)

You should feel free to share messages on social media on a regular basis linking to your state fact sheet or any other AAP resource or letter related to protecting children’s coverage. Below are some sample messages to consider using and ways to look up your members of Congress on Twitter to mention them specifically. The two main hashtags AAP is using for this effort are #KeepKidsCovered and #Docs4Coverage, which many other leading primary care groups are using as well.

**Handles for House of Representatives:** <https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/u-s-representatives/members> **and Senators:** <https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/senators/members>

**AAP Handles to follow:** @AmerAcadPeds, @AAPPres, @DrRemleyAAP, @AAPNews, @HealthyChildren







**AAP Chapters:** <https://twitter.com/AmerAcadPeds/lists/aap-chapters/members>


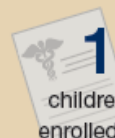
**Sample messages:**

- RT to tell @ElectedOfficialTwitterHandle that consistent, affordable coverage gives {Your State Abbreviation} kids a better chance for a healthy future. #Docs4Coverage
- .@ElectedOfficialTwitterHandle I’m a pediatrician & constituent with one message: #KeepKidsCovered. Vote no on the AHCA.
- Children’s health coverage in Your State is at x%. Let’s protect the gains we’ve made & #KeepKidsCovered!
- I’m with #Docs4Coverage and @AmerAcadPeds to ask Congress to #KeepKidsCovered!
- Medicaid matters for children. @ElectedOfficialTwitterHandle please #KeepKidsCovered! (insert graphic or state fact sheet)

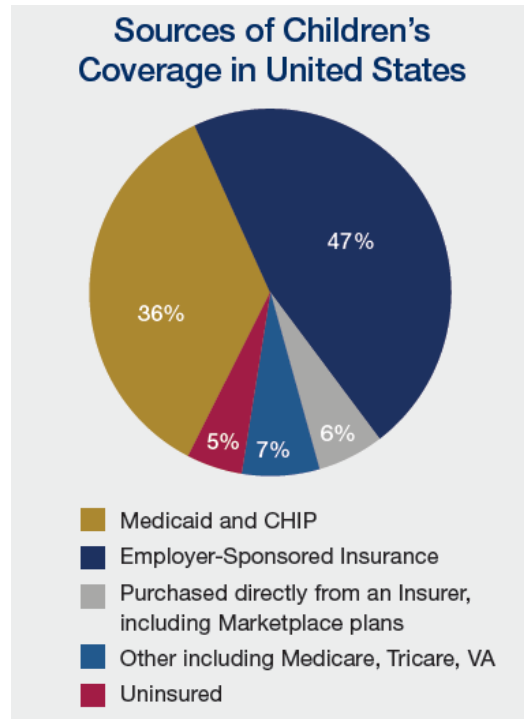
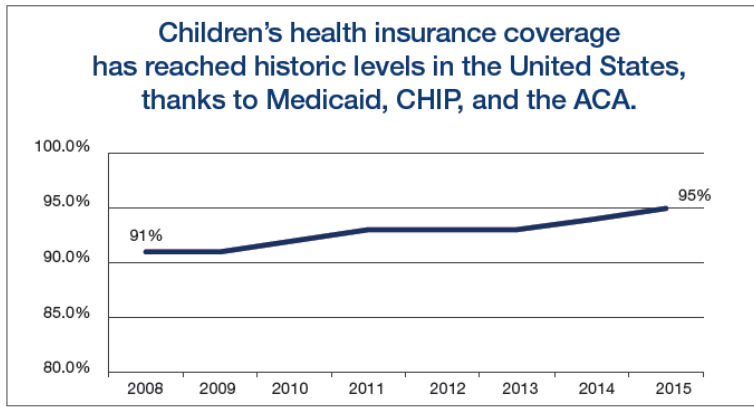
**Sample graphics (right-click to “Save Image As” and use these files on Twitter and Facebook as images)**

**Medicaid helps children grow up to reach their full potential.  
Children enrolled in Medicaid:**

 Miss fewer school days due to illness or injury	 Do better in school	 Are more likely to graduate high school and attend college	 Grow up to be healthier as adults	 Earn higher wages	 Pay more in taxes
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 <p><b>35.7 million</b> children in the United States rely on Medicaid and CHIP to access the care they need to be healthy</p>	 <p><b>1.1 million</b> children in the United States were enrolled in Marketplace plans at the end of the 2016 open enrollment period</p>
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**Medicaid and CHIP serve the United States' most vulnerable children.**

A large share of at-risk children rely on public coverage, as reflected by the percentage of United States children in each group below that depend on Medicaid and CHIP for health care they need to thrive:

- 79%** Children living in or near poverty.
- 45%** Infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers during the early years that are key to their healthy development and school readiness.
- 43%** Children with disabilities or other special health care needs such as juvenile diabetes, congenital heart conditions, or asthma.
- 100%** Children in foster care who face poverty, family dysfunction, neglect, and abuse that result in high rates of chronic health, emotional, and developmental problems.
- 48%** Newborns in low-income families to assure a healthy delivery and strong start during their critical first year of life.



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**Template Letter-to-the-Editor and Op-Ed Messages on Protecting Children's Coverage**

Please consider **writing an op-ed to your local newspaper explaining why it is important to preserve the gains made in children's health care coverage.** Op-eds are an effective medium to communicate your opinion about a timely issue in a

local or national media outlet. Op-eds are typically 500-600 words in length, though it is always important to check with the individual publication for specific length requirements (most have guidelines listed on their websites).

**Important note:** Rather than copy and pasting from this document, *please view the messages below only as example framing*, as AAP strongly recommends you tailor the language to **make it your own and add personal stories or perspectives** on why access to affordable, comprehensive health care coverage is so critical.

#### Ideas for personalization:

- Do you have a patient story or personal anecdote that highlights children's unique health needs and provides an example of why health care must be accessible, comprehensive and affordable?
- Do you have a high number of Medicaid enrollees in your patient population? Explain why Medicaid matters to these families.
- Explain the importance of preventive care in pediatrics, emphasizing why the benefits guaranteed in Medicaid are so critical to lifelong health and development.
- If you live in a state that expanded Medicaid under the ACA, explain why it is important that these children and families can keep their coverage.

**State-specific resources:** We encourage you to personalize your op-ed with state-specific statistics and data. These [state-by-state fact sheets](#) include timely and relevant information that you should feel free to weave into your piece.

#### Key messages:

Below are key messages to help guide your op-ed draft:

- As a pediatrician in **{insert city, state}**, I know first-hand the importance of ensuring children have access to affordable, comprehensive health care coverage, and I stand with the American Academy of Pediatrics in opposing the American Health Care Act (AHCA).
- Right now, the coverage rate among children in the United States is at a historic high: 95 percent. **{In our state/name of representative's district}**, that number is **{insert state/district data}** This progress was made possible by Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program and the Affordable Care Act working together.
- The AHCA would reverse this progress and jeopardize children's health. In particular, the bill would make drastic changes to Medicaid, which has served as a lifeline for children in our state and across the country.
- Any proposals that would cut enrollment in the Medicaid program would mean less coverage for those who need it most, children with special health care needs and low-income families.
- **{Insert state specific data on how many children are in Medicaid in your state}**
- Through Medicaid, these children are guaranteed benefits that cover a wide array of services like developmental, vision and hearing screenings.
- **{Insert personal anecdotes or patient stories about how Medicaid works for children in your state}**
- Children with health insurance are more likely to go to the doctor to get the care they need when they need it. They are also more likely to attend school, graduate from high school, go to college, pay more in taxes, and become healthy, successful adults than their uninsured peers.
- I urge our federal leaders to keep the needs of America's children at the forefront as they consider changes to our health care system.
- Our children and their families deserve the peace of mind knowing they have access to reliable health coverage that works.

#### Submitting your op-ed

Once you have initiated a draft op-ed, please contact Devin Miller ([dmiller@aap.org](mailto:dmiller@aap.org)) or Jamie Poslosky ([jposlosky@aap.org](mailto:jposlosky@aap.org)) in the AAP Washington Office who can provide any suggestions or feedback, answer any additional questions or provide assistance with pitching.



**Please note that many op-eds are considered “exclusive;” you can only submit your piece to one newspaper at a time.** Should one publication decline to publish your piece, you can resubmit to another, but you should avoid sending your op-ed to several newspapers at once.

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