

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Advocacy Toolkit

January 2018

For child health advocates & partner organizations

Monday, January 8th marks 100 days since Congress failed to extend long-term funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

Congressional inaction has created a dire situation for children, families and state legislatures. The patchwork solutions from Congress fail to provide the stability needed to ensure that this successful bipartisan program can continue to be there for the 9 million children who depend on it.

As families begin a new year, they must be reassured that their children will not go a single day without health care coverage.

Congress must pass a spending bill to avert a federal government shutdown by January 19. As part of that vote, we are urging lawmakers to take immediate action and extend CHIP funding for five years.

It is critical that your members of Congress hear this message from you. Please consider joining us for a **#SaveCHIP Day of Action on Wednesday, January 10**, to amplify this message. We encourage you to use the resources available in this toolkit to participate – the more voices that join together at the same time with the same message, the most likely Congress will be compelled to act. So whether it's making phone calls to your federal legislators, sharing messages on social media or engaging your colleagues in those activities, please join us in whatever way you can on January 10th!

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State of Play

CHIP was created in 1997 with overwhelming bipartisan support. Authorization and funding for the program has been renewed several times over the past 20 years, including most recently in 2015. However, Congress failed to extend federal funding for CHIP before it expired on September 30, 2017.

What's next:

Before leaving Washington in December for the holiday recess, Congress passed short-term funding for the program as part of its larger spending bill. While the legislative language states the patch runs through March 30, 2018, states and experts estimate the funding will run out far sooner than that.

States have already started to notify families that they may not have a source of coverage should Congress fail to enact a long-term extension of CHIP funding, and several states have started to use funds meant to operate the program to start shutting it down. The short-term CHIP funding is not enough to prevent states from continuing these actions, and only causes more chaos and confusion on the ground.

Following Congress' failure to extend CHIP long-term before leaving for the holiday recess, national children's advocacy organizations released this [statement](#) saying, "the greatest threat to children's health care coverage is congressional inaction."

To avert a government shutdown, lawmakers will need to pass a spending bill by January 19, 2018, when the current funding runs out.

Children's health organizations are advocating for an immediate 5-year extension of CHIP as part of that vote, and are urging that the program is extended in a bicameral, bipartisan fashion, without cutting funding for programs important to children.

Meanwhile, states continue to unveil their plans to freeze, amend, or end their CHIP programs in the face of ongoing federal funding uncertainty.

Upcoming Advocacy Opportunities

Leading children's health organizations are hosting a **#SaveCHIP Day of Action on Wednesday, January 10**. Throughout the day, we encourage advocates to contact their members of Congress, share messages on social media and amplify the message that Congress must immediately extend CHIP funding for five years. By concentrating our efforts, we hope to elevate the conversation on CHIP and draw attention to the urgency around extending funding.

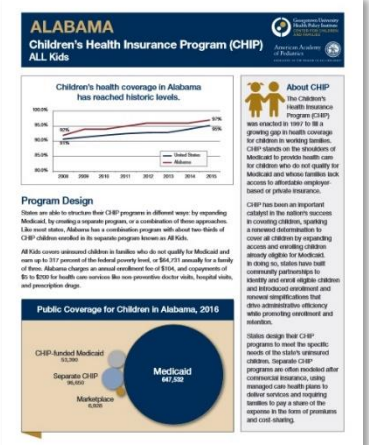
The hashtag for the Day of Action will be #SaveCHIP. We encourage you to use the sample messages in this toolkit throughout the day. We have strength in numbers, and we hope you can join us!

Earned media opportunities

Local perspectives published on the pages of newspapers across the country are powerful. Please feel free to use the messages and state-specific data in this toolkit to draft and submit op-eds and letters-to-the-editor to your state newspaper on the need to extend CHIP funding without delay.

CHIP State Fact Sheets

For state-specific data on CHIP, be sure to check out [these fact sheets](#) from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families (pictured right). The fact sheets are labeled as "CHIP Fact Sheet" under each state name. We encourage you to incorporate this state-specific data into your advocacy messaging.



Contact Your Members of Congress

Please consider reaching out directly to your federal legislators and urging them to extend CHIP funding for five years.

How to Call Your Members of Congress: To reach your members of Congress, please call **(877) 233-9025** and the operator will direct you to the DC Offices of your federal legislators. We've included the talking points below to help guide your call.

Talking points

- Hello. As a constituent of **{your state}**, I am calling today to urge **{U.S. Senator's name/U.S. Representative's name}** to pass legislation immediately that would **extend current funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for five years and maintain the bipartisan history of the program.**
- **CHIP funding expired over 100 days ago.** Now, families are facing uncertainty and entering the new year without knowing if their children will have health care coverage.
- **The short-term solutions Congress has offered so far do not give families the relief they need** so that their children can access care, and also fail to address states' funding concerns. **States and families need stability.**
- Because CHIP funding has not been extended, states have been forced to make difficult choices as they question the future of their CHIP programs. Actions include sending notices to families that they may not be able to rely on CHIP for more than another month or two. Already several states are using funds meant to operate the program to begin the process of shutting it down.
- It doesn't have to be this way. CHIP is a bipartisan success story. The program was created in 1997 and has been championed by lawmakers on both sides of the aisle since its creation.
- Nearly 9 million children across the country are enrolled in the program. CHIP stands on the shoulders of Medicaid to cover children in working families who are not eligible for Medicaid and lack access to affordable private coverage.
- Nineteen states also use CHIP to extend coverage to pregnant women, removing barriers to pregnancy coverage and prenatal care for about 370,000 women each year.
- The program is designed around what children need. It offers benefits that are age-appropriate, including dental coverage and mental health and substance abuse services, which may not be covered by a family's employer-sponsored insurance.
- CHIP plans include networks of pediatricians, pediatric medical and surgical subspecialists, and children's hospitals, which are especially critical for children with special health care needs.
- Families who rely on CHIP already face uncertainty and challenges, whether managing a complicated health condition for their child or determining how to afford day-to-day living expenses. The last thing these families need is added uncertainty about the future of their children's medical and dental coverage or whether they will have access to necessary prenatal care services.
- CHIP's proven track record of providing high-quality, cost-effective coverage for low-income children and pregnant women in working families must be continued.

- **Please extend current CHIP funding for five years immediately. Inadequate, patchwork funding is not the answer.** As families begin a new year, they must be reassured that their children will not go a single day without health care coverage.
- Thank you for all you do for children.

Social Media Messages

Hashtags to Use: #SaveCHIP (primary hashtag), #ExtendCHIP, #CHIPworks, #KeepKidsCovered

Handles for all U.S. Senators: <https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/senators/members>

Handles for all U.S. Representatives: <https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/u-s-representatives>

Be sure to use .@ if you are beginning your tweet with a Twitter handle, as indicated below. There is no need for a period before the @ sign if a twitter handle is not in the beginning of the tweet.

Because CHIP funding has not been extended long-term, states have been forced to make difficult choices as they question the future of their CHIP programs. Children's access to coverage hangs in the balance. Congress: #SaveCHIP by extending it for 5 years!

ATTN (list @Legislatorhandles): Children and families should not have to face uncertainty when it comes to their health care coverage. It's time for Congress to #ExtendCHIP long-term. #SaveCHIP

Welcome back to work (list @Legislatorhandles)! The short-term CHIP funding that was passed before the holiday recess does not provide the stability that xxxx kids in (your state) need. It's time to #ExtendCHIP long-term! #SaveCHIP

Why is CHIP important? Uninsured children are 5x more likely to have an unmet need for medical care. #SaveCHIP

CHIP is a bipartisan success story that 9 million children depend on. Families and states need stability, and what they've gotten from congressional inaction is uncertainty. Congress: #SaveCHIP now!

Children are counting on Congress to #SaveCHIP. It's bipartisan, it works, & it must be funded. @Legislatorhandles please support (your state)'s kids and act now to pass a long-term extension!

Other Helpful Resources

- A [statement](#) from leading children's health groups after Congress failed to extend CHIP funding before leaving for the holiday recess, and another [statement](#) from earlier in December
- A [letter](#) from nearly 900 organizations, urging Congress to extend CHIP funding
- A [fact sheet](#) from March of Dimes on CHIP coverage for pregnant women
- A [letter](#) from a bipartisan group of 12 governors, urging Congress to extend CHIP funding
- An [infographic](#) from the National Academy for State Health Policy, "State Checklist for Shutting Down CHIP Programs"