



October 4, 2017

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
237 Cannon House Office Building,
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hatch, Chairman Walden, Ranking Member Wyden, and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the Epilepsy Foundation, I urge you to enact a long-term funding extension for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) immediately, as the current funding has already expired. CHIP is an important program that has been successful at providing health insurance for 8.9 million children nationwide, and it must be reauthorized promptly to ensure that coverage for current beneficiaries is not interrupted. We appreciate that your committees have considered bills to fund the program and encourage you to continue supporting passage as a priority for Congress.

The Epilepsy Foundation is the leading national voluntary health association that speaks on behalf of at least 3.4 million Americans with epilepsy and seizures, including 470,000 children. We foster the wellbeing of children and adults affected by seizures through research programs, educational activities, advocacy, and direct services. Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy at some point in their lives.

CHIP is a critical source of health insurance, providing high-quality coverage to children in families that earn too much to qualify for traditional Medicaid, but too little to afford other health insurance. In some states, CHIP and Medicaid programs are combined to expand Medicaid benefits to CHIP-eligible children. More than one million people with epilepsy depend on Medicaid or CHIP for access to affordable health care.

When CHIP was first established in 1997, nearly 15 percent of America's children were uninsured. Today, the percentage of children without insurance is less than 5 percent – a remarkable reduction that can largely be credited to CHIP. For the families that depend on CHIP, there are no other affordable options for health insurance. If Congress does not pass a funding extension for CHIP, the Medicaid and Chip Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) estimates that 1.2 million children will become uninsured. For children with epilepsy and other

medical conditions who depend on reliable access to care, losing CHIP coverage could be life-threatening.

Without a CHIP funding extension, all states will exhaust federal CHIP funds by spring 2018. Many states are currently in the process of preparing Fiscal Year 2018 budgets, and will begin enrollment freezes and coverage reductions without a guarantee of CHIP funding.

CHIP was enacted in 1997 with strong bipartisan support. The Epilepsy Foundation hopes that this year's funding extension can be another opportunity for bipartisan agreement. We urge you to advocate with leadership for immediate floor consideration of CHIP, especially now that the committees of jurisdiction have considered the funding bills. Passing an extension now is necessary to ensure that no child goes without medical care because of legislative delays. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Angela Ostrom, Chief Legal Officer & Vice President Public Policy, at aostrom@efa.org or 301-918-3766.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Gattone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P" and "G".

Phil Gattone, M.Ed.
President & CEO
Epilepsy Foundation