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October 3, 2017

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our three million members and the 50 million students they serve, we urge you to Vote Yes on the KIDS Act of 2017 (S. 1827), which is scheduled for markup Wednesday, and would reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Votes associated with this issue may be included in NEA's Legislative Report Card for the 115th Congress.

CHIP has a proven track record of providing high-quality, cost-effective coverage for low-income children in working families without job-based coverage who do not qualify for Medicaid. Since the program was enacted, the number of uninsured children has fallen to record lows. Timing for renewal is critical as funding for CHIP expired September 30, 2017 and many states cannot provide stopgap funding to provide health care coverage for children serviced by the program.

Quality health care is essential for the well-being of America's children and families. Children without health insurance forgo regular checkups and doctor visits, leading to higher rates of illness and absenteeism that undermine the ability to learn and succeed in school.

CHIP serves nearly nine million children, more than half of whom are eligible for services provided in their schools through state Medicaid programs. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Medicaid reimburses schools for mental health care, vision and hearing screenings, diabetes and asthma management, wheelchairs and hearing aids, and more. That support is substantial — \$4 billion a year, according to AASA, the school superintendents association. Failure to renew CHIP would jeopardize much of that support, creating turmoil in school districts all across America.

Since its creation in 1997, CHIP has enjoyed strong, bipartisan support — recognition of its vital role in helping to ensure that every child comes to school ready and able to learn. We strongly urge you to continue that tradition by Voting Yes on S. 1827 to reauthorize CHIP immediately.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association