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September 6, 2017

United States Senate
Committee on Finance
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our three million members and the 50 million students they serve, we would like to submit the following comments in connection with tomorrow's hearing, "The Children's Health Insurance Program: The Path Forward."

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. NEA's members care deeply about their students and believe that every one of them deserves the chance for a healthy start in life.

The Children's Health Insurance Program (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 reimburse 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 at the start of a new school year.

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 and reauthorize CHIP immediately at current or higher funding levels, with no strings attached. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to submit these comments.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association