

WASHINGTON, DC – The House and Senate today sent President Bush bipartisan legislation to provide ten million children with the health care they need and deserve – legislation the President has threatened to veto. At a press conference today with Congressional leaders and health professionals in Washington, D.C, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) called upon the President to sign the legislation reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and urged members of Congress to support the measure should it return to Congress for a veto override vote.

"Today, the fate of health care for ten million children lies with the decision of one man – President Bush," said Rep. Hoyer. "Democrats are hopeful the President will choose not to veto this critical bill, but if he does, we are working hard to secure enough votes for an override."

The CHIP bill passed both chambers of Congress with significant bipartisan majorities and has a veto proof margin in the Senate. The House voted it through 265-159 with the support of 45 Republicans; 18 Republicans joined the majority in the Senate to approve the measure 69-30. The bill is also supported by 43 governors - 16 of them Republicans.

A new ABCNews/ Washington Post poll released just yesterday shows that 72 percent of Americans support the \$35 billion increase in the federally funded children's health insurance program – with the people who "strongly" support the bill outnumbering its strong opponents by three to one. Support crosses party lines: 81 percent of Democrats; 69 percent of Independents; and 61 percent of Republicans.

"We have hundreds of groups, dozens of governors, and senior Republicans working on our side. And according to recently polling, we have the vast majority of Americans on our side," stated Hoyer. "It is disappointing and certainly perplexing that in the face of this widespread bipartisan support, President Bush refuses to back down from his ill-advised threat to veto this critical children's health care legislation."

Every member of the Maryland Congressional Delegation voted in support of the measure, with the exception of Congressman Roscoe Bartlett of the 6th District. Currently, more than 100,000 children in Maryland participate in the CHIP program. The increased funding would provide an additional 42,000 children who qualify for coverage but are not yet enrolled.

## Congress Sends Children's Health Care Bill to President

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“The Maryland delegation stands united in our support for insuring ten million kids under this bill, with the exception of Congressman Roscoe Bartlett,” stated Congressman Hoyer. “In the end, we hope that he will support this legislation, and we hope to sustain the support we have from Congressman Gilchrest and others if it comes down to an override vote.”

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