

WASHINGTON, DC – Following discussions between the House and the Senate on reauthorizing the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), it was announced today that both chambers will vote on a final bill that will insure 10 million children and include an enhanced dental benefit championed by members of the Maryland Congressional delegation. Congressman Steny H. Hoyer and the delegation released the details of the bill today and called upon the President to join the Congress in approving this critical bill to ensure children’s health care. The House is expected to vote on the bill on Tuesday.

“The House and Senate have agreed upon final legislation to ensure that more of our uninsured children receive the health care they need,” stated Rep. Hoyer. “We expect to pass this legislation very soon. It will now be up to the President to decide whether he wants to join us in our efforts to provide health care for 10 million children or not.”

The CHIP provides health coverage to American children whose parents do not qualify for Medicaid, but can’t afford private insurance. The \$35 billion agreement struck by House and Senate negotiators will bring health coverage to approximately 10 million children in need – preserving coverage for all 6 million children currently covered by CHIP, and reaching millions more low-income, uninsured American children in the next five years.

The House-Senate CHIP legislation will also provide a guaranteed dental benefit for all children enrolled in the program. Rep. Hoyer touted the efforts of the Maryland delegation – mobilized by the tragic death of twelve-year old Prince George’s County resident Deamonte Driver who died after a tooth infection spread to his brain – to ensure the dental guarantee was included in the final bill. Stated Hoyer, “It is because of the passionate and tireless effort of our Maryland delegation, and in particular Senator Ben Cardin and Congressmen Cummings and Wynn, that children in need will receive dental coverage under this bill.”

“Today we have reached another great milestone in ensuring that the death of Deamonte Driver was not in vain,” Congressman Elijah E. Cummings said. “There are millions of Deamontes across the country who will benefit from the inclusion of dental benefits in the CHIP reauthorization.”

Congressman Wynn said, “I am disappointed that the compromise achieved today will not cover as many children as the House called for. However, I am pleased that the agreement includes a guaranteed dental benefit for children. As we have seen in the wake of the Deamonte Driver tragedy, this is particularly important in the State of Maryland. I am also glad that this bill

includes the provision ensuring mental health parity. We must continue to work hard to expand health care coverage under SCHIP to provide coverage to all uninsured American children.”

Since it was enacted in 1997, the Children's Health Insurance Program has enabled millions of uninsured children across the nation to receive the medical care they need. Despite its success, the program currently lacks the resources to fulfill its goal, leaving more than 6 million eligible children nationwide uninsured. In the State of Maryland, there are 60,000 children who qualify for the program but are not currently enrolled.

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