

WHITE PLAINS, MD -- **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin** (D-MD) and **U.S. Congressman Steny Hoyer** (MD-5) today visited the Charles County Department of Health to talk about the importance of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for the children of Charles County and Maryland.

Last week, President Obama signed into law the CHIP bill, which was passed by Congress with wide bipartisan support. It will fund health care for approximately 6.7 million American children already enrolled in the program, and it also will expand health care services to approximately 4 million children from low-income families who do not qualify for Medicaid and who would otherwise be uninsured.

In Maryland, the CHIP bill will fully fund the 110,000 children currently enrolled in the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP). Currently, 2,000 children from Charles County are enrolled in MCHP. The new law will provide funding to expand health coverage to approximately 42,800 Maryland children who are currently uninsured.

"Too many Americans have no insurance, but this bill takes a step in the right direction by ensuring that millions of uninsured children will have access to quality health care," said **Senator Cardin**

. "This time America's children are going to come out as winners because they are going to get the health care services they need."

"No child in Leonardtown, White Plains, Waldorf, or anywhere throughout our nation should ever go without medical care," stated **Congressman Hoyer**. "Enactment of the SCHIP legislation will allow us to help raise a healthier generation of Americans, reduce the much more costly use of emergency rooms for primary care, and move us closer to providing every child in our nation with affordable, high-quality health care."

"After three years of fighting for this legislation, President Obama pushed us across the finish line, signing the SCHIP bill within hours of final passage," continued **Congressman Hoyer**, who led efforts in the House in the last Congress to overcome two Presidential vetoes. "Providing health coverage for America's children is the change America needs and has asked for."

The CHIP bill also includes several of Senator Cardin's proposals, including a guaranteed dental benefit, a dental education program for parents of newborns and a new Department of Health and Human Services website and toll-free number with information about dental coverage and a list of providers.

"Dental care is an essential part of appropriate medical care," said **Senator Cardin**. "In 2007, 12-year-old Deamonte Driver from Prince George's County died from a brain infection caused by a tooth abscess. Treating a cavity takes very little time or effort, but the death of a child from tooth decay is a national tragedy we must make sure never happens again."

The CHIP bill includes provisions that will:

- Provide an additional \$31.5 billion over 4-1/2 years in new funding for the CHIP program;
- Provide health care to an additional 4 million low-income children;
- Provide a guaranteed dental benefit to children enrolled in CHIP;
- Provide for mental health services; and,
- Provide a funding source by increasing the federal excise tax to 61 cents on a pack of cigarettes.

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