

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) joined a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives voting in support of final bipartisan legislation to provide health care to 11 million children in modest-income families . The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization Act (H.R. 2) was approved by a vote of 290-135. Passage by the House today sent the bill to President Obama, who will sign the bill later this afternoon.

"No child in Leonardtown, Greenbelt, Waldorf, or anywhere throughout our nation should ever go without medical care," **stated Rep. Hoyer**. "With final passage of the SCHIP bill, we have taken a major step in ensuring more children in our country have access to the health care they need and deserve.

"After three years of fighting for this legislation, I am pleased that President Obama will be signing this key bill into law today," **continued Rep. Hoyer, noting that the bill is virtually identical to SCHIP legislation that was vetoed twice by President Bush in the last Congress** . "Providing health coverage for America's children is the change America needs and has asked for. This critical 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."

The bipartisan bill reauthorizes the State Children's Health Insurance Program through FY 2013. It preserves the coverage for all 7.1 million children currently covered by SCHIP, including preserving the coverage of 110,000 children in Maryland. Additionally, under the new law, Maryland will be able to enroll another 42,800 children who are currently eligible for, but not enrolled in the program, reducing the number of uninsured children in the State by 54 percent. Among other improvements, the bill ensures that quality dental coverage will now be provided to all children enrolled in the program.

The bill is fully paid for with a 62-cent increase in the tobacco tax. Raising the tobacco tax also promotes children's health - by discouraging children from smoking. According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the 62-cent increase will likely lead to nearly 1.9 million fewer children taking up smoking.

"With rising unemployment, this children's health bill is more critical than ever," **said Hoyer** . "In this recession, more and more American parents are losing employer-sponsored health care for their children. But covering more eligible children is not only the right thing to do -

it makes good economic sense for taxpayers who will not foot the bill for costlier problems down the road. In addition, a healthy child is better prepared for learning and success."

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was created in 1997 to provide health care coverage for children in families that earn too little to afford health insurance for their children themselves but too much to qualify for Medicaid. This bill will give states the resources and incentives necessary to reach and cover millions of uninsured children who are currently eligible for, but not enrolled in, SCHIP and Medicaid. Among other improvements, the bill ensures that quality dental coverage will now be provided to all children enrolled in SCHIP.

[Read text of Rep. Hoyer's floor statement](#)

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