



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

December 11, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
S-230 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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RE: Reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of Tribal governments and communities, we are writing to encourage the Senate to promptly consider bipartisan legislation to reauthorize CHIP. This program has been profoundly successful in Indian Country and failure to reauthorize it would have dire impacts.

CHIP plays an especially critical role in ensuring that American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children receive health insurance given that they rely on Medicaid and CHIP at higher levels than the general population. A 2015 Georgetown University [study](#) found that 54 percent of AI/AN children were enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP as compared to 39 percent of all children.

The uninsured rate among AI/AN children has decreased dramatically over the last several years due to CHIP and CHIP-funded Medicaid. States with high proportions of AI/AN children—Alaska, Arizona, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota—saw double digit declines in their uninsured rates between 2008 and 2015. Nevertheless, the uninsured rate among AI/AN children remains alarming. For instance, the uninsured rate in North Dakota = 25%, Montana = 24%, Oklahoma = 20%, and Arizona = 19%.

If Congress fails to reauthorize CHIP, these percentages will drastically increase as thousands of AI/AN children will lose their health insurance. As a result, the chronically underfunded Indian Health Service would be forced to further ration the services it provides in order to ensure that AI/AN children receive coverage.

NCAI strongly encourages the Senate to pass bipartisan legislation reauthorizing CHIP. Approving such legislation would help ensure that AI/AN children get the health care coverage they deserve.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Pata  
Executive Director