



ROMAN CATHOLIC
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Vote to re-authorize funding for children's health insurance, community leaders urge Congress

Bishop Clark sends letter to Kuhl, Reynolds

ROCHESTER, New York – Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester officials, a pediatric expert at Golisano Children's Hospital and other community leaders today urged Congress to re-authorize funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP.

The call to "put children first" came at a news conference today at the Diocese of Rochester offices on Buffalo Road, Gates, attended by Catholic officials, Dr. Laura Shone of Golisano Children's Hospital at Strong, Rev. Richard Myers, president of the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, Wade Norwood of Finger Lakes Health Systems and Marsha Dumka, executive director of Rochester Childfirst Network.

In addition, Bishop of Rochester Matthew Clark sent a letter to Republican Congressmen Thomas Reynolds and Randy Kuhl asking them to join the bipartisan effort to restore the funding by overriding President Bush's veto.

"It is important that children have access to basic health coverage," the bishop said in his letter. "There are millions of children nationally and thousands in your Congressional District without health insurance."

“I view health care as a basic right of every individual, intrinsic in the dignity of the human person; and support state and federal efforts to expand opportunities for coverage for the most vulnerable members of our communities... I am confident that you are considering this issue carefully, and am hopeful that you will find a way to support legislation that will significantly improve access to quality health care for all families.”

SCHIP is a life preserver for families suffering job loss or other changes and needing health insurance. “People generally turn to SCHIP after having private insurance when they lose access due to job changes, divorce or moving,” said Dr. Shone, assistant professor of Pediatrics at Golisano Children’s Hospital. “Changes like this can be hard on children and families – but loss of health insurance is one hardship we can prevent.”

SCHIP offers health insurance for children whose parents earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but cannot afford coverage for their children. Some families qualify for free coverage, and others pay a monthly premium based on how much they earn. More than 400,000 children are enrolled in New York State.

Marvin Mich, director of Social Policy for the Catholic Family Center, added, “The president’s proposal does not provide nearly enough funding to continue coverage for those already enrolled and would lead to children losing coverage. These are children at risk and there is no greater investment we can make in our country’s future.” END OF RELEASE