

**A LETTER FROM THE NATION'S CHAIRS
OF MEDICAL SCHOOL PEDIATRIC DEPARTMENTS**

March 2005

Dear U.S. Senator:

Dear U.S. Representative:

As chairs of pediatric departments in medical schools across the country, we are writing to urge you to oppose reductions in the federal share of the Medicaid program and to support efforts to address the major challenges facing children in Medicaid: barriers to enrollment, barriers to access to pediatric care, and absence of federal investment in quality and performance measures.

Simply put: Medicaid matters to children and their providers like no other individual public or private payer of health care. It pays for the health care of one in four children, one in three infants, and nearly half of the patient care provided by children's hospitals. Proposed reductions of tens of billions of dollars in the federal share of Medicaid, coupled with reductions already enacted by states, will place in jeopardy the nation's largest payer of health care for children and the patients of children's hospitals we serve.

Congress is focused on how to reduce future Medicaid spending, but Medicaid for children is not a budget buster. Children are more than half of all Medicaid recipients but account less than 25 percent of its costs, including children with disabilities. Medicaid coverage for children is efficient, costing no more than private coverage, even though children under Medicaid have more health care needs, on average, than do privately insured children. Medicaid coverage for children is effective – publicly covered children have no more unmet health needs than the privately insured. Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program provide a safety net to the nation's children.

The biggest challenges facing Medicaid coverage for children are not spending but the program's unfulfilled promise:

- Millions of children are eligible for Medicaid but unenrolled.
- Medicaid reimbursement falls far short of the costs of pediatric care, which increasingly jeopardizes children's access to care. Indeed, it falls far short of Medicare payment, which is widely regarded as inadequate for physician care.
- Medicaid has a major responsibility, as the nation's largest payer of health care for children, to invest in the development of measures to encourage quality and performance in pediatric care. But the federal government is making virtually no such investment; and the need exceeds the ability of individual states.

As pediatric department chairs in the nation's medical colleges who work daily with sick children, we urge Congress and the Administration to keep the promise of Medicaid to the nation's most vulnerable children. In the interest of adequate care for all children, we urgently ask that you oppose reductions in federal funding for Medicaid and address the challenges facing Medicaid coverage for children.

Sincerely,

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MARCH, 2005

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