

(New Castle, PA) - Today, U.S. Representative Jason Altmire (PA-4) joined health care advocates and Lawrence County families receiving Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage in calling for President Bush and Congress to move quickly to pass legislation that will protect their health care coverage and extend the program to more uninsured children in Pennsylvania.

The CHAMP Act, which passed last week in the U.S. House of Representatives, would reauthorize CHIP and protect coverage for 6 million children, including 179,807 in Pennsylvania, while extending health care coverage to 5 million more low to moderate income children, covering a total of 11 million children nationwide. Families who rely on CHIP for their children's health care face losing their coverage if the bill is not reauthorized by September 30, 2007.

"Pennsylvania has been a leader in its implementation and management of the CHIP program," said Congressman Altmire. **"CHIP has made it possible for thousands of children in Pennsylvania to access health care services, including basic immunizations, prescriptions, dental exams and annual well-visits."**

"Congress has made a commitment to protect this program by passing bills in both the House and Senate, and we will continue to do our part as we work to reauthorize CHIP in conference," continued Congressman Altmire. **"While Congress is leading the fight on children's health care, I urge President Bush to withdraw his veto threat on this critical health care legislation. We must pass this bill to ensure that this successful program continues and expands so that children, whether in western Pennsylvania or anywhere else in our nation, never have to go without health care."**

"Pennsylvania has taken bold steps to ensure that every child in our Commonwealth receives health insurance. However, for us to reap the rewards of this action and assure a healthy future for our children, we must commit to appropriate funding of the CHIP program," said Dr. Robert Cicco, Immediate Past President of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Associate Director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at The Western Pennsylvania Hospital in Pittsburgh, PA. **"Without this commitment, we will be left with children having coverage on paper but still unable to access needed health promotion services and medical treatments."**

"Dental care must be addressed from childhood to avoid the progression of oral health disease, which in adulthood has been correlated to heart disease," said New Castle dentist Dr. Andrew Matta.

"The CHIP program gives families the ability to provide their children with high-quality preventive dental care. Good oral health care is essential to the long-term health of our children."

"I am a self-employed, small business owner and cannot afford my own health insurance coverage. I know how scary it can be to go day-to-day worrying about what might happen if I get sick," said Tanya Parker, owner of Parker Family Day Care in New Castle. **"CHIP at least provides my family with a little peace of mind knowing that my granddaughter can get the health care that she needs. I am pleased that Congressman Altmire has taken the lead in protecting this important program for our family and so many like ours in Lawrence County and across the country."**

The State Children's Health Insurance Program was established by Congress in 1997 to expand health coverage for children. It provides matching funds to states to help them provide health care for children living in families that are earning too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance. Since it was created in 1997, CHIP has been a successful, cost-effective program.