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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KATHLEEN SEBELIUS, GOVERNOR

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Nicole Corcoran, Press Secretary
785.368.8500

The following is a column by Governor Kathleen Sebelius:

Children's health care at stake

Research has clearly shown us the connection between a child's health and his or her ability to be successful in school, and ultimately in life. Healthier children are more successful, a fact that, when coupled with our moral obligation to care for our nation's children, has helped spur national efforts to improve health care for the youngest Americans.

That's why there's been such strong support in both parties and in all regions of the country for the State Children's Health Insurance Program ever since its creation in 1997.

More than 34,000 Kansas children receive health care from this effort, known as HealthWave here, and the benefits go far beyond just their immediate health. Access to health care means less time spent out of school because of illness, as well as healthier and more vibrant childhoods. These children are then more likely to grow up to be healthier, more productive adults.

Nationwide this program has given millions of children the opportunity to see a doctor, to receive preventative care and to live healthier lives. Yet the great progress we've made is now threatened.

Congress has to renew the State Children's Health Insurance Program by the end of September, otherwise the 6.6 million children nationwide who currently receive their health care from this initiative will lose their coverage.

Both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate have passed not only continuations, but expansions of this vital health care effort. The Senate's, for example, would cover an additional 3.3 million children nationwide – a big step forward in our work to make comprehensive health care a reality.

Senator Roberts voted for the Senate version of the plan, and Representatives Moore and Boyda voted for the House bill, and those delegation members deserve our thanks.

Now the conference committee will resolve the differences and I hope you will reach out to the entire delegation to urge a “yes” vote on reauthorizing the Children’s Health Insurance program, and overriding a Presidential veto, if necessary.

This effort to enhance the health of children is a bright spot in an otherwise troubled American health care system. For the more than 34,000 Kansas children who are healthier as a result of this program, I hope you’ll join me in working to see that it continues.

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