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January 13, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

Speaker

United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-6501

Re: H.R. 2, "*Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act*"

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the patients we represent, National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) is pleased to offer its strong support for H.R. 2, the "*Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act*." National Patient Advocate Foundation enthusiastically advocates the reauthorization and expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) in order to preserve the gains made in children's health since its inception in 1997.

NPAF is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving access to healthcare services through policy reform. Our mission of creating avenues of patient access through improved access to, and reimbursement for, evolving therapies, therapeutic agents, and devices is influenced by the experience of patients who receive case management services from our companion organization, Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF). Last year, PAF received more than 7.5 million inquiries from patients throughout the United States seeking information and assistance for access to care issues resulting from diagnoses of a chronic, debilitating or life-threatening disease. Of those, 45,870 became full patient cases involving communications made by PAF staff on behalf of a patient in order to reach positive resolution.

SCHIP has been successful at expanding health coverage for lower-income children and improving the health care they receive. According to the Government Accountability Office, SCHIP, as of fiscal year 2005, covered approximately 6 million enrollees including about 639,000 adults. Under the new economic circumstances, a strong reauthorization of SCHIP is critical in order to provide access to critically important health services to uninsured children.

A recent Kaiser Family Foundation report exploring the anticipated effects of the current economic downturn on our uninsured population demonstrates a growing need. Approximately 11 percent of children under age 18, or 8.1 million children, were uninsured in 2007. The majority of these children came from low or middle-income families. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, "more than two-thirds of the 8.1 million uninsured children in the U.S. live in families with household incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level (\$42,406 for a family of four in 2007)." Nearly all of these children (approximately 6.2 million) are eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP but not enrolled.

Improving the development of outreach efforts to promote SCHIP enrollment is a critical element to reducing the number of uninsured children. NPAF supports national and state strategies to further develop outreach methods that link together schools, community-based organizations, health care providers and private business groups to retain existing enrollees and reach eligible but un-enrolled family populations.

NPAF remains extremely concerned with the number of children who lack health insurance coverage and strongly supports and advocates the reauthorization and expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program to provide the health security needed by the nation's children.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Davenport-Ennis". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Nancy Davenport-Ennis
President & CEO