

September 27, 2006

Dear Senator/Representative:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing in support of an extension of the Transitional Medical Assistance (TMA) program, which expires on December 31. The TMA program provides temporary health care coverage to families who have become ineligible for Medicaid because of earnings, often because they have left welfare to enter the workforce. *If Congress does not act by the end of this year, several hundred thousand low-income working women and their children will lose their health care coverage and in all likelihood join the ranks of the uninsured, the number of which is already at an all-time high.*

The TMA program was established in 1988 and was originally authorized for 10 years. With bipartisan support, TMA has never been permitted to expire and has been extended several times since then, most recently in the Deficit Reduction Act, enacted this past February. The Administration's FY 07 Budget proposes to extend the TMA program through September 30, 2007. The National Governor's Association describes TMA as a "crucial work support" and supports its continuation as an essential element of welfare reform.

When low-income mothers transition from welfare to work, the jobs they are likely to find are low-wage entry positions that generally do not offer health insurance. If the jobs do offer health insurance, low-wage workers are often unable to afford the coverage. By making Medicaid coverage available to these workers for a limited period of time, TMA enables them to make the transition without jeopardizing access to needed health care services. As the National Governors Association asserts in its official policy position on welfare reform, "Without access to regular health care, health problems of a new worker or the worker's family members are likely to lead to greater absenteeism and possibly to job loss."

The 109th Congress should not adjourn without ensuring that this crucial work support continues to be available to families leaving welfare for work through at least the end of FY 2007.

Sincerely,

African American Health Alliance
AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth &
Families
The Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of People with
Disabilities
American Counseling Association
American Federation of State, County and
Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Medical Student Association
American Network of Community Options
and Resources
American Nurses Association
American Public Health Association
Association for Community Affiliated Plans

Association of Jewish Family and Children's
Agencies
Association of University Centers on
Disabilities
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Campaign for America's Future
Center for Community Change
Center for Law and Social Policy
Center for Public Policy Priorities
Child Welfare League of America
Church Women United
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Catalyst
Consumers Union
Council for Health and Human Service
Ministries (United Church of Christ)

County Welfare Directors Association of
California
Easter Seals
Families USA
Health and Disability Advocates
HIV Medicine Association
Housing Works
International Union, United Auto Workers
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Lutheran Services in America
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of
the Good Shepherd
National Association for Children's
Behavioral Health
National Association of Community Health
Centers
National Association of County Behavioral
Health and Developmental Disability
Directors
National Association of County Human
Services Administrators
National Association of Mental Health
Planning and Advisory Councils
National Association of Public Hospitals
National Center for Law and Economic
Justice
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on Independent Living
National Health Law Program
National Mental Health Association
National Network for Youth
National Partnership for Women and
Families
National Puerto Rican Coalition
National Respite Coalition
National Urban League
National WIC Association
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
Parent Voices of California
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities
Coalition
RESULTS
Service Employees International Union
Summit Health Institute for Research and
Education, Inc.
The Arc of the United States
UJA – Federation of New York

Union for Reform Judaism
United Cerebral Palsy
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness
Ministries
United Jewish Communities
USAction
Voices for America's Children
Women Work! The National Network for
Women's Employment