

Children's Health Insurance Program Launched in Charles County

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On Monday, Feb. 9 in the Charles County Health Department offices in White Plains, Congressman Steny Hoyer and U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin announced the passage of the long awaited health insurance program that not only covers children for basic healthcare needs, but expands coverage to include an additional four million children across the nation.

According to Sen. Cardin (D-MD) who spoke before a gathering of Southern Maryland and Charles County Commissioners, "Americans are going through a very tough time in this economy. People are losing their jobs in record numbers and this new program will ensure that children have access to at least the most basic healthcare."

"Too many Americans have no insurance, but this bill takes a step in the right direction by ensuring that millions of uninsured children will have access to quality health care," said Cardin. "This time America's children are going to come out as winners because they are going to get the health care services they need."

The popular House Majority Leader, Hoyer (D-MD) reinforced Cardin's remarks, but added that this would not be the end of the effort to bring affordable healthcare to all Americans, but only the beginning. "Americans voted for change in November and elected President Obama. We will work in congress to make sure that change happens. It will be a tough fight, but we will prevail."

"No child in Leonardtown, White Plains, Waldorf, or anywhere throughout our nation should ever go without medical care," stated Hoyer. "Enactment of the SCHIP legislation will allow us to help raise a healthier generation of Americans, reduce the much more costly use of emergency rooms for primary care, and move us closer to providing every child in our nation with affordable, high-quality health care."

In Maryland, the CHIP bill will fully fund the 110,000 children currently enrolled in the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP). Currently, 2,000 children from Charles County are enrolled in MCHP. The new law will provide funding to expand health coverage to approximately 42,800 Maryland children who are currently uninsured.

In the final analysis, it may be that a universal healthcare system that helps people to see family practitioners and dentists will save millions over a healthcare system now forced to pay for emergency room visits instead of a doctor's visit.

One of the examples mentioned by all the speakers at the press conference was that of a 12-year old from PG County that had a simple toothache, but his mother could not afford a dentist or find one that would accept Medicaid. As a result, the child's tooth abscessed, the infection reached his brain and after \$250 thousand in surgery and other doctor's bills, the boy died.

"Because he did not have access to a dentists for about \$80, this young man died and it cost over \$250 thousand," said Hoyer.

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