



For Immediate Release

Contact: Craig Orfield
(202) 224-6770

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A children's health care plan should focus on kids

Enzi advocates efficiency over political expediency

Washington, D.C. - An efficient children's health insurance plan should concentrate resources and funding on kids who need it most, not balloon to encompass adults and lure away those already covered by private insurance, U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, said today.

Enzi advocates a plan that would exclude all earmarks and provisions unrelated to the SCHIP (State Child Health Insurance Program), save money and actually provide coverage for more kids.

"Every child in America should have health insurance and access to quality health care. We should renew SCHIP and keep it strong," Enzi said. "The alternative SCHIP legislation I support fully funds and strengthens the current state children's program. A meaningful solution would target kids in families that don't qualify for Medicaid, but can't afford to get health insurance on their own, so they can receive the care they need."

Enzi opposed a version of the SCHIP renewal that went before the Senate today, which would add \$35 billion in spending to the current Republican commitment of \$25 billion. Enzi objects to watering down funding for children's health care by allowing parents and childless adults to access the additional \$35 billion in funding. Children should get the funding first.

"We need to help all Americans get health insurance, but there are better, more efficient ways than spoiling a good children's plan," Enzi said. "I have introduced a first-class 10-step plan that would help us achieve the goal of comprehensive health care reform. We need our tax dollars to work hard for us, like they do in SCHIP, but we don't want them wasted on the expansion of another federal program that has lost sight of its original mission."

Enzi said the plan being pushed by the majority party in the Senate would not be as efficient as providing to children in the private market. Under some circumstances adults would be included. In some places solidly middle class children and adults would be included, even though there are still many thousands of children in lower income families, including many kids in Wyoming, who are not. It would also encourage families that have private coverage to stop paying those bills and instead opt for the federal government to pay for their health insurance through SCHIP.

“It simply isn’t fair to kids whose parents can’t afford their health insurance, to take SCHIP funding for adult health care,” Enzi said. “We need to preserve SCHIP and fully-fund its original intent, which has worked wonders in Wyoming and across the country. We shouldn’t create a new federal entitlement and we shouldn’t be laying the foundation for Castro-style health care, which Americans don’t want.”

“Right now in Wyoming, almost half of the uninsured children who are eligible for SCHIP coverage are not enrolled,” Enzi said. “We need to work on getting these children, and other children in need across the country, the health care they deserve before we start using SCHIP money to cover middle class adults. The people of Wyoming should not foot the bill for someone in another state making over \$80,000, while our own children lack the care they need. It’s not right.”

Enzi is disappointed that today’s debate was limited to the state children’s health insurance program, noting the urgent health care needs of about 45 million uninsured Americans remain unmet.

“Every health care dollar we pour into a bad plan is a dollar we could use for a good one,” Enzi said. “We have an opportunity to reauthorize and improve a good children’s health care bill and also to get to work on broad and sweeping health care reform that includes everyone – kids, parents, and senior citizens.

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