

**KENNEDY, ROCKEFELLER, SNOWE URGE CONGRESS TO ACT SWIFTLY TO
SUFFICIENTLY FUND CHIP**

Senators Re-Introduce Bill to Meet Funding Shortfalls for 14 States

Washington, DC – Yesterday, Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Senator John D. (Jay) Rockefeller IV (D-WV), Olympia Snow (R-ME) introduced a bill to address the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) funding shortfalls that at least 14 states will experience this year. Without additional and immediate federal dollars, thousands of children currently enrolled in CHIP could lose their health insurance coverage.

“Children are our future, and making sure they have health care ought to be our top priority. The CHIP program has made a difference in the lives of millions of children, but it faces a growing budget shortfall that puts health coverage for hundreds of thousands of children in jeopardy, including more than 160,000 in Massachusetts. Without additional funding, Massachusetts will fall \$90 million short of the funds needed to cover currently enrolled children. This bill will make sure that working families across the nation won’t be left wondering if they can afford to take their child to the doctor when they’re sick,” said Kennedy.

“Since its creation in 1997, CHIP has been successful in providing millions of children with health care they would have otherwise been denied,” said Rockefeller. “More than 38,000 children in West Virginia are covered by this vital program each year. Unfortunately, the health and well-being of thousands of children will be in jeopardy if Congress does not act quickly to fill in these shortfalls. At the end of last year, we took a small step toward addressing this problem. Now, we must finish the job. The health of our children depends on sufficiently funding this vital program, and our children should not have to wait.”

“The success of SCHIP is indisputable. The number of uninsured low income children in the United States has decreased by more than 25 percent since the program’s creation in 1997,” said Snowe. “More than 14,000 children now receive health insurance through the State Children Health Insurance Program in Maine alone, and more than 6 million nationally. The effectiveness and continued growth of this program has increased both its importance and its need. The budget shortfall for this Fiscal Year could leave hundreds of thousands of children without coverage, and that is simply unacceptable. We cannot afford to lose ground on the progress that has been made and must take action to ensure states have the funding they need to not only maintain coverage, but continue to increase the number of eligible people enrolled.”

The Rockefeller-Snowe-Kennedy Keep Children Covered Act (S. 401) would provide the resources necessary to fill the federal CHIP funding shortfalls remaining in at least 14 states: Alaska, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin. The National Institutes of Health Reform Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-482) redistributed portions of

unspent fiscal year 2004 and 2005 CHIP funds in order to address \$124 million of the projected fiscal year 2007 shortfalls. However, the Congressional Research Service estimates that an additional \$745 million is necessary to eliminate the shortfalls entirely and protect coverage for children.

In 1997, Rockefeller authored the CHIP program with the late Senator John Chaffee (R-RI). To date, CHIP has provided health insurance to more than 6 million American children. The program is up for reauthorization this year.