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****REMARKS AND FACT SHEET INCLUDED**

KENNEDY CELEBRATES PASSAGE OF CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, DC— Today, the Senate passed H.R. 976, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. The \$35 billion agreement will bring health coverage to approximately ten million children in need – preserving coverage for all 6.6 million children currently covered by CHIP and providing coverage to an additional 4 million uninsured children. The agreement provides \$100 million in grants for new outreach activities to states, local governments, schools, community-based organizations, safety-net providers and others to enroll millions more low-income, uninsured American children in the next five years. The bill will also provide quality dental coverage to all children enrolled in CHIP, and ensures states will offer mental health services on par with medical and surgical benefits covered under CHIP. In addition, the agreement protects medically necessary benefits (EPSDT) for low-income children. Senator Kennedy was the lead author of the original legislation in 1997.

Upon passage tonight, Senator Kennedy said, "Today we listened to the American people and said yes to the most important advance in children's health in a decade. This bill will give 10 million children a healthy start in life and peace of mind to millions of parents. Democrats and Republicans put politics aside to put children first and I urge the President to do the same. 600,000 more children became uninsured last year and it is baffling to me that the President would veto a bill that fixes a problem that happened on his watch. The President and every Member of Congress enjoy guaranteed health care coverage. We owe the children of America no less. If the President vetoes this bill, then our duty is clear. We will be back tomorrow, and the next day, and for however long it takes to see this bipartisan bill become law."

(As Prepared for Delivery)

The measure of a just society is how it treats its most vulnerable citizens – especially our children.

Today, we voted to make America an even better nation. Democrats and Republicans said yes to our children and we urge President Bush to say yes, too.

We said yes to the most important advance in child health in a decade.

We said yes to a program that will give 10 million children a healthy start in life.

And we said yes to the promise of a better future for America's children.

This is not just about health insurance.

It's about giving parents peace of mind. It's about keeping children healthy so they do well in school.

It's about preparing the next generation of Americans to live better lives.

In his campaign, President Bush declared that "America's children must have a healthy start in life."

He pledged to "lead an aggressive effort to enroll millions of poor children who are eligible but not signed up for the government's health insurance programs."

But vetoing this bill will do just the opposite.

It will mean that fewer children receive health coverage, not more.

Our bipartisan action today matches the President's commitment of the past.

We urge him to sign this bill, and give new hope to millions of low-income working families who can't afford health care for their children.

President Bush and every Member of Congress have good health care coverage for their children.

We owe all the children of America nothing less.

Massachusetts CHIP Facts

- There are currently 112,000 children in Massachusetts that have no insurance
- Massachusetts currently has 90,500 children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program
 - They are currently enrolled at up to 300% of the federal poverty level (\$61,950 for family of four)
- Under the bill, Massachusetts will receive an estimated \$304.8 million in fiscal year 2008
 - The Commonwealth needs \$277 million to take care of the 90,500 children currently enrolled in SCHIP for 2008.
- With the bill, Massachusetts could cover as many as 27,400 children who are now uninsured over the next five years.

- If Congress had allowed the program to expire without providing any funds, the Commonwealth would have been out of money as of OCTOBER 1st

From poll conducted by Children's Hospital in Boston-

- Nearly 7 in 10 Mass. voters (69%) want Congress to provide enough funding to expand CHIP. Only 7% would favor keeping funding at current levels, which would result in dropping children from the program.
- Massachusetts voters reject the argument that there are other more important funding priorities and they disagree that cutting taxes should take precedence over children's health. About three quarters of voters reject both these arguments, including majorities of Republicans, Independents and Democrats, as well as voters from all income levels.

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