



News Release

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Contact: Erin Howard (202-724-3303; ehoward@aap.org)

AAP PRESIDENT-ELECT TESTIFIES BEFORE SENATE COMMITTEE, APPLAUDS ATTENTION TO CHILDREN'S BENEFITS

Washington, DC—The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, today praised the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee (HELP) and its health care reform legislation's attention to children's benefits, but cautioned lawmakers not to allow children's needs to be overlooked during crucial health care reform negotiations.

"I am here to urge you to keep children's health needs prominent as the health reform process plays out. And I urge you to do this not just for the children, but because a focus on children is the foundation of a health system that works. In this economic environment, we are all looking for cost containment. There is no better way to do that than to invest early in a healthy citizenry," said Judith Palfrey, MD, FAAP, President-Elect; American Academy of Pediatrics.

Dr. Palfrey reiterated the Academy's support of comprehensive insurance coverage for all children, and that coverage should mean access to the right benefits in a medical home with payment rates that allow real access to services in public and private programs. She also commended the committee for its recognition that all HRSA funded preventive guidelines (also known as "Bright Futures") receiving first dollar coverage in new Gateway plans, as laid out in the legislation.

"These preventive services will have enormous benefits not only for children while they are young, but doing the right thing for children will help prevent the adult consequences of obesity, mental illness and developmental dysfunction," Dr. Palfrey explained. "Bright Futures focuses on parental responsibility for their children's health and places the appropriate emphasis on families and provides the tools they need to help their children."

The Academy strongly believes that the country needs to develop a public-private health care financing system for children that will achieve the goal of quality health insurance for all infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For the millions of children and adolescents in the United States not covered by private insurance, Medicaid or CHIP, there needs to be a secure safety net. Children have unique health and developmental needs, and Congress must create a system in which every child born has access to quality care, including cost-saving care coordination.

"We are hopeful that as the health reform process evolves, you continue to prioritize coverage, benefits and access to medical homes through appropriate payment rates for child health services. Health insurance for children is a smart investment that President Obama prioritized in his campaign. We hope to see all children benefit as a result of your important work," Dr. Palfrey concluded.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.