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**Bush Budget Puts Future of Health Care for All Children in Jeopardy,
According to National Pediatric Groups**

Budget Kills Funding for Children's Physicians

(Washington, DC) – President Bush will release his Fiscal Year 2009 budget on Monday. In it he puts access to health care for all children in jeopardy because the budget **eliminates** the bipartisan Children's Graduate Medical Education (CHGME) Program. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Academic Pediatric Association (APA), American Pediatric Society (APS) Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs (AMSPDC), National Association of Children's Hospitals (N.A.C.H.), and Society for Pediatric Research (SPR)—representing the vast majority of pediatricians and child health experts—urge Congress to reject the request and instead demonstrate its commitment to children's health care by fully funding CHGME in FY 2009.

Less than two weeks after the U.S. House of Representatives only narrowly sustained the President's veto of SCHIP legislation that would have provided health coverage for almost 4 million additional eligible children and adolescents, President Bush has asked Congress in his FY 2009 budget request to eliminate the bipartisan CHGME program. CHGME provides over \$301 million annually in indispensable investment in the nation's nearly 60 independent children's teaching hospitals. They train 35 percent of all pediatricians, half of all pediatric subspecialists, and the large majority of the nation's pediatric research scientists.

Children's hospitals that receive CHGME funding account for less than 1 percent of all hospitals, but they provide half or more of all inpatient care for children with serious conditions such as heart defects, cancer, serious burns, and organ transplants. They also house the nation's premier centers of pediatric research, and are the safety net for children of low-income families in their regions. "Children's hospitals provide a large share of pediatric services to impoverished and minority children across the U.S., therefore a cut to children's hospitals is, in effect, a cut to pediatric services that benefit these children and families," said Peter Szilagyi, MD, MPH, APA president. "All of these services depend on the ability of these hospitals to maintain and strengthen their programs to train physicians in the unique health care needs of children."

"This is a one-two punch against children's health care," said Renée R. Jenkins, MD, FAAP, AAP president. "Coming on the heels of the SCHIP veto, which denied health coverage to millions of uninsured children, the President's proposal to eliminate CHGME funding would put even more of pediatric medicine at risk."

"The children's hospitals that receive CHGME funding are laying the foundation for providing pediatric primary and specialty care, as well as biomedical and health services research, critical to improving the quality and cost effectiveness of children's health care well into the future," Jenkins added.

(more)

CHGME

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“CHGME has been a tremendous, bipartisan success since it was first established in 1999 and reauthorized by virtually unanimous votes in the House and Senate in 2006, which extended the program for five years. The President’s request is a flagrant disregard of both congressional will and the recommendations of the united pediatric community,” said Marianne Felice, MD, FAAP, AMSPDC president.

“CHGME has been successful in addressing a serious national shortages of pediatric subspecialists in many regions of the country and the clamor for physicians who can improve the quality and outcomes of the care they provide,” said Lawrence McAndrews, N.A.C.H. president and CEO.

Thanks to CHGME funding, since 2000, children’s hospitals have been responsible for 67 percent of the growth in pediatric subspecialists trained and 76 percent of the growth in the number of pediatric residents trained. It also has enabled children’s hospitals to make major strides in introducing new physicians to the measurement and improvement of the quality of care for children. “Children’s hospitals are at the cutting edge of the transformation of pediatric care,” added McAndrews.

In his State of the Union Address, President Bush said that the programs he proposed for elimination, such as CHGME, were “wasteful and bloated.” Looking back at previous budgets, the President requested \$303 million for the program in FY 2005 and, in FY 2006, agreed with Congress to authorize \$330 million to train pediatricians. The current funding level is lower at \$301 million.

The purpose of CHGME is to give independent children’s teaching hospitals a level of federal support for the training of children’s doctors comparable to what the federal government provides to adult teaching hospitals through Medicare. In fact, CHGME currently provides only about 80 percent of the level of GME support Medicare provides to adult hospitals.

The AAP, APA, AMSPDC, APA, APS, N.A.C.H, and SPR strongly recommend that Congress appropriate the full, authorized level of \$330 million for CHGME in FY 2009, the level of funding comparable to what the federal government provides for GME in adult teaching hospitals through Medicare.

These organizations include the vast majority of pediatricians in the United States (both practicing and academic-based pediatricians), children’s hospitals, pediatric educators, leaders of medical school departments of pediatrics, pediatric medical and surgical sub specialists, and other child health experts.

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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.

The Academic Pediatric Association (APA) is an organization whose objectives are to improve teaching, research, and services in general pediatrics, and to affect public and governmental opinion regarding issues vital to teaching, research, and patient care in general pediatrics..

The American Pediatric Society (APS) is an organization bringing men and women together for the advancement of the study of children and their diseases; for the prevention of illness; and the promotion of pediatric education and research, and to honor those who, by their contributions to pediatrics, have aided in its advancement.

The Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs (AMSPDC) is an organization of chairs of medical school pediatric departments who are responsible for the conduct of teaching, patient care, research and service within American medical schools and their clinical services.

The National Association of Children's Hospitals (N.A.C.H.) represents more than 135 children's hospitals across the country, including independent acute care children's hospitals, children's specialty hospitals, and children's hospitals that operate within larger institutions.

The Society for Pediatric Research (SPR) is an international society for scientists whose purpose is to encourage investigation of a broad range of areas involving the health and well being of children.