

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2, the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization Act to extend coverage to 11 million children by a vote of [289 to 139](#) . Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus, voted for the bill.

“Extending health coverage to millions of uninsured children is not only the right thing to do at this dire time for America’s working families, it is a smart thing to do to stimulate the economy,” Rep. Becerra said.

“As millions of families across the nation are struck by job losses and foreclosures they are simultaneously losing their family’s health coverage. The expanded SCHIP program will not only allow families to provide health care to their children, it will free up extra dollars to purchase groceries and other goods that stimulate the economy. This is absolutely the change we needed.”

H.R. 2 is based on legislation that passed the House and Senate twice with overwhelming bipartisan support in the previous 110th Congress and vetoed by President Bush both times. It preserves coverage for 7 million children currently covered by SCHIP and extends coverage to 4 million uninsured children who are currently eligible for, but not enrolled in SCHIP or Medicaid. The bill is fully paid-for by a 61 cent increase in the tobacco tax.

The bill includes language from the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA), giving states the option of covering legal immigrant children who have been in the country for fewer than five years. The current five-year wait period puts these children at risk of suffering from undetected diseases that could turn into costly chronic conditions if gone untreated.

“Five years can be a lifetime for children, and when their parents are not only paying taxes, but even serving in the armed forces, having them wait for health care is against our values as a country,” Rep. Becerra said. “This is not just about Latino families; this is an issue of providing some sense of health care security for all.”

SCHIP was created in 1997 to provide health care coverage for children in families that earn too

much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford private insurance.

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