

# Health Coalition for Children and Youth

American Diabetes Association  
American Lung Association, WA Chapter  
Benton Franklin Community Health Alliance  
Cedar River Group  
Children's Alliance  
Children's Home Society of Washington  
Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center  
CHOICE Regional Health Network  
Communities Connect  
Community Health Plan  
Community Health Network of Washington  
Community Minded Enterprises  
Group Health Cooperative  
King County Project Access  
Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle  
Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington State  
March of Dimes, WA Chapter  
Mary Bridge Children's Hospital - MultiCare Health System  
Molina Healthcare of Washington  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, WA Chapter  
National Association of Social Workers, Washington State Chapter  
Northwest Health Law Advocates  
Northwest International Health Action Coalition  
Planned Parenthood Public Policy Network of Washington  
Public Health - Seattle & King County  
Sacred Heart Children's Hospital  
School Nurse Organization of Washington  
Sea Mar Community Health Centers  
SEIU Healthcare 1199NW  
SEIU WA State Council  
Solid Ground  
Statewide Poverty Action Network  
Swedish Medical Center  
Washington Association Churches  
Washington Association of Community and Migrant Health Centers  
Washington Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics  
Washington Community Action Network  
Washington Dental Service Foundation  
Washington Health Foundation  
Washington State Hospital Association  
Washington State Medical Association  
Washington State Nurses Association  
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO  
Washington State Oral Health Coalition  
WithinReach  
Yakima County Health Care Coalition

January 28, 2009

The Honorable Patty Murray  
173 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-4701

Dear Senator Murray,

As the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress begins, states around the nation face unprecedented economic crises and Congress faces the daunting task of creating an economic stimulus package that protects and expands basic infrastructure, creates jobs and stimulates spending. The Health Coalition for Children and Youth urges your support for an economic stimulus package that will help Washington avoid devastating health care cuts that threaten to decimate our state's health care infrastructure and make the recession even worse.

Washington State faces a budget deficit exceeding \$6 billion. To balance our state budget we would need to cut current programs and services by 30 percent. Many of the cuts proposed in the Governor's budget are to the very health care safety net programs upon which people are relying as they lost their jobs. Even a planned expansion to cover children up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level has been suspended—stepping away from the goal to Cover All Kids by 2010.

Proposed state budget cuts would eliminate insurance and reduce access to care for thousands of Washingtonians, creating a cascade of demand. Overloading clinics and emergency rooms will culminate in higher insurance premiums that are typically passed on from already-struggling small and large employers to their employees. The following components of a stimulus package would help provide stability to our state's health care safety net and the thousands of individuals and families who rely upon it.

- A temporary FMAP increase at the level originally proposed by the Senate (8% across-the-board) with a requirement that Medicaid eligibility levels cannot be more restrictive than they were July 1, 2008.
- Temporary funding to cover involuntarily unemployed individuals and their families under Medicaid if their family income is below 200% of the federal poverty level.
- Flexibility for states to use premium assistance funds currently slated for COBRA to also fund lower-cost interim insurance coverage for the unemployed. Allowing the unemployed to choose between premium assistance for their existing insurance or the state's Basic Health program will allow them to choose a more affordable option for coverage.

We appreciate your steadfast support of SCHIP reauthorization and the qualifying states provision. We strongly urge your support for an economic stimulus package that protects the health of Washingtonians and maintains the core health care infrastructure in our state.

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