U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Room 2125, Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515–6115

July 25, 2007

The Honorable John D. Dingell
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles B. Rangel
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell and Chairman Rangel:

Improving the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is important, and a bipartisan effort under your leadership, as Chairmen of the committees of jurisdiction, is the best way to do it. Needy, sick children are not Democrats or Republicans, they're just young people who need our help.

We urge you in the strongest terms to at least attempt to reach bipartisan consensus before using children's health to achieve partisan political advantage.

As you know, not only has no effort been made at bipartisanship on the substance of the legislation, almost no effort has been attempted even on legislative procedure. An Energy and Commerce Committee markup was scheduled today, first at 10:00 a.m. then at 4 p.m., but we did not receive the proposed markup vehicle until 11:33 p.m. Sixteen hours and twenty-seven minutes is hardly an appropriate amount of time to read, digest and attempt to improve over 400 pages of evolving legislative text, especially in a bill that proposes to cut public health programs like Medicare Advantage and reimbursement for skilled nursing and long-term care for seniors, and which funds the program through a dramatic increase of the tobacco tax.

Our committees should stop and consider what we are doing, and the way we are doing it. We request the normal legislative hearings be held on this proposal, in both the Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Committee on Ways and Means, to help

Members of both parties fully grasp the implications of the proposal to children, to all of our constituents, and to the taxpayers who will finance it. Members are attempting to learn the details of this important proposal right now, and a hearing will provide a fair and honest opportunity to do it and do it the right way.

We are prepared to reach across the aisle to build a bipartisan support for a good bill, and encourage you both to do the same.

Sincerely,

Joe Barton
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce

Jim McCrery
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means