Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 3, 2009

The Honorable Louise Slaughter
House Committee on Rules
H-312 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Slaughter:

We are writing to respectfully request your support to have an amendment made in order tomorrow when the House considers the Senate amendment to H.R. 2, the Children's Health Insurance Program ("SCHIP") Reauthorization Act of 2009.

The amendment would ensure that all States verify the identity of all applicants for the SCHIP and Medicaid programs.

Republicans have had no opportunity to offer any amendment to the legislation to reduce fraud and abuse for several years, most recently during the House's consideration of H.R. 2 in January.

This amendment is appropriate because the latest SCHIP legislation will overturn existing law and allow for "verbal attestation" of welfare applicants' identities. Given the growing prevalence of identity theft, having welfare officials require less identification than what a checkout clerk at a grocery store normally demands seems likely to encourage fraud and throw the program into disrepute.

Daily life in America is marked by the routine requirement that we demonstrate that we are who we say we are. Even members of Congress wear special lapel pins because the Capitol police don't always recognize us.

As you know, fraud in SCHIP and Medicaid is a real problem. According to investigative reporting by *The New York Times,* over 10 percent of Medicaid spending in the State of New York goes to pay claims that are simply criminally fraudulent. A recent report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services unfortunately not only confirmed this level of program fraud in New York, it found a nationwide fraud or error rate of over 10 percent for all claims. This level of program fraud equates to over $40 billion dollars annually in wrongfully paid SCHIP and Medicaid payments.

This straightforward amendment will reduce fraud and abuse in the Medicaid program and will help reduce the prevalence of identity theft in the United States, and we hope you will give it serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Joe Barton
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce

Nathan Deal
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health

Cc: The Honorable David Dreier
Ranking Member
House Committee on Rules