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The Honorable John Rockefeller  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Pete Stark  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Rockefeller and Congressman Stark:

On behalf of more than 3 million volunteers and 1400 staff members of the March of Dimes Foundation, I want to commend you for re-introducing the "Medikids Health Insurance Act of 2007." The March of Dimes is pleased to support this legislation that would make important strides in providing access to health coverage for infants and children.

We at the Foundation recognize and appreciate your many contributions to improving access to health coverage for children and their families. Yet, information prepared for the March of Dimes by the Bureau of the Census and released last fall confirms that, despite the availability of Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, in 2005, 9 million (11.6%) of the nation's 78 million children under age 19 were uninsured. This figure represents an increase of over 300,000 from 2004 figures and the first increase since 1998. Of particular concern to the March of Dimes, more than 125,000 infants born in hospitals in the year 2003 were uninsured. This is a troubling statistic because though uninsured newborns are more likely than insured infants to have significant healthcare needs, they receive fewer hospital services.

As you know so well, the Institute of Medicine has found that health insurance status is the single most important influence in determining whether health care is accessible to children when they need it. Moreover, uninsured children are the most likely to have no usual source of medical care – 28.8 percent, compared with only 2.5 percent of privately insured youngsters and 5.5 percent of children in public insurance programs.

By building on the current mixed system of public and private coverage, the proposal you offer would take a measured and reasonable approach to ensuring that all children have access to needed health services, including immunizations and recommended well child visits as well as specialty care for those with chronic medical needs. We at the Foundation view this aspect of the "Medikids Health Insurance Act of 2007" as singularly important.

Once again, thank you for your vision and leadership in crafting the "Medikids Health Insurance Act of 2007" and know that the volunteers and staff of the March of Dimes stand ready to assist in your efforts to make meaningful and affordable health coverage available for every child.

Sincerely,

Marina L. Weiss, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice President, Public Policy  
and Government Affairs