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Senate Budget puts nation on road to covering all children

Faith leaders from PICO National Network hailed passage of the Senate Budget resolution, which provides \$50 billion in new funding for reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), as a major step on the road to providing affordable health coverage to all children in the United States.

"The Senate budget offers the promise of hope and health care to millions of children in working families," said Rev. Heyward Wiggins of PICO National Network, "America's faith communities won't stop campaigning until we see a day when no child goes without treatment or relies on an emergency room for their care."

PICO estimates that this funding will provide room for states to cover approximately 5 million uninsured children and protect coverage for another 1.5 million who currently depend on SCHIP.

Faith leaders praised the bipartisan support for SCHIP expansion demonstrated during the floor debate and votes on key amendments. "Strong bipartisan support for \$50 billion in new funding shows that children's health is an area where both parties can come together for the best interests of children and families," said Rev. Wiggins. The draft House budget resolution also includes \$50 billion in new funding for SCHIP reauthorization and is expected to pass the full House next week.

As part of PICO's nation-wide [Cover All Children](#) campaign more than 400 clergy and families held a Faith and Families Summit on Children's Health on Capitol Hill this month. PICO members pressed Congress to fully fund the SCHIP program, and key legislators from the House and Senate participated in PICO Summit events.

PICO clergy are planning to return to Washington after the Easter Congressional recess to press the House and the Senate to move quickly to use the \$50 billion in the budget to reauthorize the SCHIP program. PICO's five point [Road Map to Covering All Children by 2012](#) calls for improvements to the SCHIP program that include creating financial incentives for states to enroll and retain more eligible children and allowing states the option to cover pregnant women and documented immigrants.

PICO also announced that it is leading state-level faith-based campaigns to expand health coverage for children in 12 states. "We need our states to seize the opportunity of federal action on children's coverage to reach uninsured children and expand eligibility," said Susan Molina, a PICO leader from Metro Organizations for People in Denver. Susan is a single parent of uninsured children. She testified before the House Energy and Commerce Committee in February about her experience and is leading a campaign in Colorado to pass legislation to cover all children in her state.

PICO has been working at the local and state level to expand health coverage for children since 2000.

- PICO championed a county-by-county cover-all-children initiative in California that has reached half the state's counties and is now a national model.
- In September 2006 PICO launched a campaign in 1,000 congregations to educate families on what is at-stake in SCHIP reauthorization.
- In December 2006 more than 200 prominent clergy affiliated with PICO asked Congressional leaders to use SCHIP reauthorization as an opportunity to cover all children.
- In February Susan Molina, a parent from PICO's faith-based effort in Denver told her story of having uninsured children at Energy and Commerce hearings.
- In March four hundred clergy and families from PICO came to Capitol Hill to press Congress to include the funding in the federal budget needed to help states cover all children. PICO clergy stood with representatives of all the major faith traditions to press for covering all children.
- In March PICO released a national clergy letter on children's health funding in the budget held prayer vigils and events on children's health funding in 25 cities across the country.

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PICO is a national network of 1,000 congregations and 53 faith-based federations working to improve communities and strengthen families in 150 cities and 17 states. For more information please visit www.piconetwork.org/schip.html.