



Top Priorities for Families in a National Economic Recovery Package

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1. **All Kids Should Have Healthcare:** *This point was written in collaboration with First Focus, Families USA, and National Council of La Raza.*

We urge Congress to rapidly reauthorize an expanded State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), while also moving forward quickly to full healthcare reform. We understand that Congress is considering incorporating SCHIP reauthorization into its economic recovery package in January 2009. Investment in strengthening SCHIP and other health care programs will help to provide families with the resources necessary to keep their children healthy during tough economic times. Whether reauthorization is incorporated into that package, or goes as a separate bill, we urge its passage quickly in early 2009, well in advance of March 2009 when SCHIP funds expire. Another simple funding extension would further exacerbate program uncertainty in a time when demand is high.

Specifically, we urge you to support and advocate among your colleagues to expand upon last year's legislation and incorporate the following SCHIP-related provisions:

- a. **Fully fund current and projected enrollment for 5 years.** Governors have recently urged Congress for multiple-year SCHIP funding because they need funding certainty in order to plan and administer their programs responsibly. A strong funding package is critical for states to: 1) continue providing insurance to the children already enrolled in SCHIP; 2) find and enroll the majority of uninsured children who already qualify but are not yet enrolled; and 3) extend insurance to more uninsured children.
- b. **Provide temporary Medicaid relief as part of the economic recovery plan.** During the current period of economic recession and state budget deficits, the federal government can help states maintain health coverage for children and families by temporarily boosting the matching rate for Medicaid as part of the economic recovery plan.
- c. **Lift the 5-year ban on federal matching funds for legal immigrant children and pregnant women.** Children and pregnant women should not have to wait 5 years before they can get healthcare, if they are otherwise eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP. This arbitrary delay in eligibility means that children and pregnant women are going without needed healthcare, which will have long-lasting effects on their health and productivity. No child with cancer should have to wait five years for chemotherapy, no child in need of glasses should have to wait five years to see a chalkboard at school, and no pregnant woman should be asked to wait five years for prenatal care.
- d. **Maintain states' current flexibility in determining eligibility.** State flexibility in determining income eligibility is integral to the success of the SCHIP program due to large variations in the cost of living across the country. For example, in California where cost of living is much higher than in other states (for example, a family at 300% of poverty in San Francisco has a lower standard of living than a family at 200% of poverty in Atlanta) residents rely on this flexibility.
- e. **Reauthorize well in advance of the March 31, 2009 deadline.** Uncertainty about the future of federal SCHIP funding is putting states in a difficult budgeting position. For example, such uncertainty has already brought about the serious threat that California would freeze its SCHIP program, putting hundreds of thousands of

children on a wait list. Other states could be in a similar position if the future of SCHIP is not decided well before the end of their legislative sessions this spring. The earlier states know what commitment the federal government is making to SCHIP, the more likely they will be to continue and grow their SCHIP programs, which is of utmost importance in this time of need for America's working families.

2. **Unemployment Coverage Is Needed for Part-Time Workers - Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act:** *This point was written in collaboration with Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), National Employment Law Project (NELP), Coalition on Human Needs (CHN), the AFLCIO, Half in 10 Campaign, and the Progressive States Network.*

Including the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act (UIMA) in the economic recovery package is essential because right now only 37 percent of unemployed workers receive unemployment benefits. That leaves 63% of workers left out! This is largely because Unemployment Insurance was created in 1935, and its rules are outmoded and fail to reflect how the workforce has changed dramatically since then: There are far more low-wage, part-time, and women workers in the labor market whose incomes are essential to the family budget--and whose jobs are at risk in this economic crisis.

3. **States Need Funds Now for Paid Family Leave Insurance:** *This point also appears in the Valuing Families in the Recovery document signed by MomsRising and forty-four other groups. See the entire Valuing Families document at: www.nationalpartnership.org/transition*

The recovery package should include a Federal fund of \$1.5 billion for states – no matching required - to use as start-up funding to enact state paid family leave insurance programs. Such funding will have a stimulating effect by providing wage replacement when workers are absent from work. Without such programs, workers' spending is likely to be even further curtailed if they lose pay when they miss work.

4. **Immediately Address Early Learning Needs:** *This point was written in collaboration with the National Women's Law Center, Head Start, and the First Five Years Fund.*

The recovery package should immediately increase funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start, and Early Head Start by \$6 billion in the first year of an economic package. The current economic crisis has created tremendous strains for families, as well as for child care and Head Start providers who were already vulnerable after years of neglect of these critical programs.

Investments in these programs will have a strong stimulative effect, allowing child care and Head Start programs to serve more families and hire additional staff. By providing additional funding for Head Start, we can ensure that low wage workers have a safe and high quality place to put their children while they are working. Studies have shown that child care is a key part of the economy and is responsible for generating nearly \$580 billion in labor income and \$69 billion in tax revenue while providing more than 15 million jobs.

5. **Jobs Which Help Everybody Should Be Created:** *Much of this point also appears in the Valuing Families in the Recovery document signed by MomsRising and forty-four other groups. See the entire Valuing Families document at: www.nationalpartnership.org/transition*

Jobs created by the economic recovery plan should be good quality jobs.

* A good, quality job provides livable wages and benefits so people can support their families and paid time off so people can care for themselves and family members.

- Paid sick days for preventative care or to stay home when employees or their family members have a short-term illness;
- Family and medical leave insurance that provides wage replacement while a worker is recovering from a serious illness, caring for a seriously ill family member, or bonding with a new child, and;
- Some control to people over their own work schedules, including predictability and advance notice of schedules.

* Any businesses creating jobs as part of the economic recovery plan should be required to provide transparency and accountability to ensure that the jobs they create are good quality jobs.

* As a part of job creation, companies receiving contracts should be required to include jobs for historically underrepresented populations, with training as appropriate, to ensure that all people are given opportunity to benefit from the new jobs.

* When creating the job recovery package, special attention must be paid to not focusing a disproportionate number of recovery resources in male-dominated job sectors, while inadvertently ignoring the needs of women who work in female-dominated job sectors.