

public citizens for children + youth

Statement to City Council on Resolution in Support of Public Health Insurance Programs Submitted by Colleen McCauley, Health Policy Director, Public Citizens for Children and Youth

January 26, 2017

Councilwoman Bass and City Council Members, thank you for your vocal support to protect high quality health care and affordable insurance through the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

I am Colleen McCauley, Health Policy Director at Public Citizens for Children and Youth or PCCY, a child advocacy and policy organization working on behalf of kids in Philadelphia and across southeast Pennsylvania.

For over 20 years, PCCY has operated a telephone Helpline assisting thousands of parents apply for Medicaid and CHIP for their children.

One of those parents is a self-employed, single father of two daughters. His younger child has asthma and a heart murmur. She has pre-existing conditions, but kids with pre-existing conditions are eligible for CHIP and Medicaid. The daughter requires inhaler medications to treat her asthma and heart monitoring for her murmur. We were successful in helping the dad secure insurance, and because of her coverage, she gets the medication she needs to be in school and stay active and heart care to maintain her health and prevent complications of her cardiac condition.

More than 75% of Philadelphia children are enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP – an astounding three in four Philly children rely on public health insurance to keep them healthy – to prevent them from becoming sick and provide treatment if they get sick. Children rely on public health insurance across the state as well – with one in three Pennsylvania children covered by Medicaid or CHIP.

Medicaid and CHIP are exemplary examples of good public policy for children. They offer comprehensive, child-focused benefits and the programs are cost effective. Did you know it costs 50% less to insure a child through CHIP than the average uncompensated care costs for children currently being covered by hospitals and the state? It costs \$2,500 to insure a child in CHIP for the year and nearly \$5,000 to provide uncompensated care.

PCCY recently released a report on Philadelphia child well-being, and it was only in the health sector where improvement for kids has occurred since the depth of the recession back in 2008. In addition to health, we looked at how kids had fared in K-12 public education, in early childhood education and in terms of economic well-being – but it was only in the health sector where we've seen improvements for kids over time.



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Why is that? It's because good public policies such as Medicaid and CHIP matter and have been demonstrated to change the life outcomes of children.

And when some kids don't have health insurance, all kids are impacted. When a child without insurance doesn't get vaccinated, for example, and she catches whooping cough as a result, the child's classmates, teachers in her school, other riders on her bus are at increased risk for becoming sick. And one of the top reasons kids are absent from school is because they are sick. Having insurance and access to health care is the booster that kids require to stay healthy and be in school.

Programs like Medicaid work for kids and for their parents and other adults – and as the old adage goes, “No need to fix what isn't broken”.

Children and adults alike should have access to affordable, high quality health care coverage. We cannot go backward at this time. Any plan to modify Medicaid, CHIP and the Affordable Care Act must preserve coverage gains for all of the Philadelphians and the one million plus Pennsylvanians who are enrolled in them.