

federal SCHIP program with sufficient resources and without the reduction in eligibility proposed by the president.

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Expand, don't restrict, health insurance for kids

Thanks for the excellent article on the State Children's Health Insurance Program (April 29, "States push kids' health insurance"). Through SCHIP, the federal government shares in the cost of state programs like New York's Child Health Plus that provide basic health insurance coverage on a sliding scale basis for the children of parents who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford health insurance.

As the article indicated, SCHIP is up for renewal by Congress this year and a lot is at stake for America's children. But SCHIP is important locally as well as nationally. Between 2002-03 and 2004-05, data from the Census Bureau show that the percentage of New York children without health insurance fell from 10.2 percent to 7.6 percent. And, according to the New York State Health Department, Child Health Plus now keeps over 4,000 children in Schenectady County out of the ranks of the uninsured.

In the next several years, additional children in local families with slightly higher incomes could be protected, since the state Legislature recently approved Gov. Spitzer's proposal to expand eligibility to children in families with incomes up to 400 percent of the poverty level. Other states are also moving in this direction.

But President Bush has asked Congress to limit federal funding to children in families below 200 percent of the poverty level.

Congress should support the states' efforts to reduce the number of uninsured children by reauthorizing the