

Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) Fact Sheet

This year Congress will reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). This is an opportunity to ensure that California's children have access to affordable health care and to secure the necessary federal funding to move California towards real health care reform for all residents. The Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) of 2007 is a vital part of that solution.

What is ICHIA?

The Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) of 2007 (S. 764, H.R. 1308) is a federal bill that has been introduced in both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives with bipartisan support. ICHIA is being considered by Congress as one of this year's priorities within the SCHIP reauthorization. ICHIA would allow states to provide federally funded medical coverage to lawfully residing immigrant children and pregnant women under Medicaid and SCHIP, with no waiting period.

In 1996, Congress added a new barrier to health care for most recently arrived immigrants by requiring them to wait five years before they could enroll in the federal Medicaid or SCHIP programs. ICHIA would remove this barrier by allowing states to cover these individuals with federal funds. ICHIA would restore equity and allow access to public health coverage for low-income lawfully residing immigrants – families who have gone through the immigration process, are working and paying taxes but are prevented from obtaining affordable health care coverage for their children.

How Would ICHIA benefit California?

ICHIA would bring California additional federal revenue. California long ago recognized that an arbitrary barrier such as the five year waiting period for lawfully residing immigrants was not cost-effective and invested its own funds to provide coverage to these individuals in the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families programs. This strategy has helped to ensure that lawfully residing children and pregnant women in California have access to preventive and primary care, thereby reducing the need for emergency room services, protecting public health, improving health outcomes and increasing the ability of California's children to learn and develop critical skills for their future. ICHIA would make federal dollars available for this care, and would encourage other states to do what California and many other states are already doing.

With the influx of additional federal revenue that would result from the passage of ICHIA, California could move further ahead on the state's health reform efforts and become a national leader.

A Statewide Partnership of:

APALC Asian Pacific American Legal Center • **NILC** National Immigration Law Center • **CHIRLA** Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles • **SIREN** Services Immigrant Rights & Education Network •

Who Supports this?

ICHIA is supported by the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and hundreds of national and state organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and the National Council of La Raza. The bill is currently sponsored by California Representatives: Berman, Lantos, Solis and Waxman. For a list of California groups supporting ICHIA go to: www.caimmigrant.org.

What Can Groups Do to Support ICHIA?

- ✓ **Sign on to support ICHIA:** Join hundreds of groups in support of ICHIA by signing on to a national support letter at: www.caimmigrant.org.
- ✓ **Contact the Governor:** Urge Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to include ICHIA as part of California's priorities for this year's SCHIP reauthorization. Contact the Governor at 916-445-2841 or at: <http://www.govmail.ca.gov>.
- ✓ **Contact Congress:** Ask your Member of Congress to include ICHIA in this year's SCHIP reauthorization priorities. The next few weeks are a critical time to make sure that California's Congressional representatives under the benefits of ICHIA to California and ensure its passage in Congress.
 - You can contact your Member by calling the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and request to be connected to her/his office. Once connected, ask to speak with staff working on health issues. Ask them to support the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) of 2007 (S.764, H.R. 1308) and to urge their colleagues in Congress to pass ICHIA as part of this year's SCHIP reauthorization.

California can only benefit from ICHIA. ICHIA will bring in additional federal revenue in recognition of the investment California has already made in providing health coverage to low-income immigrant children and pregnant women. The new federal revenue can help the state to move ahead on health care reform for all Californians. For all these reasons, California should let Congress know that ICHIA must be included as a priority in this year's SCHIP reauthorization.

For more information about ICHIA, go to www.caimmigrant.org or contact Cary Sanders at (510) 663-8282 ext. 303 or Sonal Ambegaokar at (213) 639-3900 ext. 114

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