

# Prioritize Kids' Health: Safeguard Medicaid

Today's children represent the future of our nation and their health must be a top priority. Ensuring that children have access to strong insurance coverage is critical to their health. Today, more than 95 percent of U.S. children are insured. Medicaid, covering nearly half of these children, is the single largest source of health care coverage for kids in the U.S. — it plays a critical role in children growing up healthy. About 37 million children rely on Medicaid for health care services. The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) builds on Medicaid's foundation with an additional 9 million children relying on it. Because of the success of these critical programs, children are growing up stronger. To protect our future, Congress must safeguard Medicaid for the children who depend on it to lead healthy, productive lives.

## An Essential Investment in Our Nation's Future

Healthy children grow up to become healthy adults, and Medicaid coverage tailored to the unique needs of kids helps ensure enrolled children are able to reach their full potential. While children account for about half of all Medicaid beneficiaries, they account for less than 20 percent of program spending — making Medicaid a smart investment in our children's and nation's future.

- **Medicaid covers important pediatric benefits for children.** Children must have access to a range of developmentally appropriate services and providers, and Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit is tailored for children to ensure they receive necessary primary, specialty and subspecialty care.
- **Medicaid is essential for children with medical complexity.** Six percent of children covered by Medicaid have complex medical conditions requiring ongoing and specialized care. Without Medicaid, many of these children — even those with private insurance coverage — would not be able to access or afford the extensive services and supports they need to survive.
- **Investing in Medicaid for children yields lifelong returns.** Children covered by Medicaid, compared to those who are uninsured, go on to enjoy better health, lower rates of mortality and higher educational and economic outcomes as they become adults. Medicaid is also an effective investment in our national security, covering the children who will become the future of our nation's economic, community and military leadership.

As Congress considers the future of health care, it is imperative that coverage and access for children are not jeopardized. Any potential changes must be evaluated on this standard: **how do we best protect and prioritize the health of our nation's children?**