



## **Protecting Children's Health Letter to the Editor Message Points January 2017**

### **Overview:**

Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are short opinion pieces submitted to newspapers by readers. Typically, papers limit the length to 200 words, though some allow 250 words. Depending on the paper, you can submit LTEs via an online form on the paper's website or via email to an editor. While not necessary, it always helps to reference a recent story that ran in the paper.

**Fact:** the opinion page typically has the highest readership of any page in the paper!

Below are talking points that you can use in a LTE about possible changes to the key programs and policies supporting children's health insurance coverage. Please note that there is far more information here than you can include in one LTE; this is meant to give you a menu of options for crafting your letter. We recommend making one point only in an LTE and supporting it with a couple facts and a strong conclusion / call for action.

### **Children's Health Insurance:**

- Health insurance coverage is the foundation for good, lifelong health. It provides children with access to the preventative services and medical care they need to achieve and maintain their best physical, oral, and mental health.
- Keeping our children healthy is key to many of our state's goals. Asthma, diabetes, and even tooth decay can affect children's ability to learn and keep them home from school, leaving them to fall behind academically.
- Just over 20 years ago, 16 percent of North Carolina's children were uninsured. Today, as a result of Medicaid, SCHIP, and the Affordable Care Act, only four percent of children in North Carolina lack insurance.
- Any changes to our nation's core children's health programs and policies must maintain the historic gains we have made in insurance coverage, access to services, and guaranteed benefits.

### **The ACA:**

- According to a recent Urban Institute report, repealing the ACA could leave over 150,000 children in North Carolina without health insurance.
- The ACA works for children by strengthening access to preventive services, protecting children with preexisting conditions, and improving health insurance coverage rates.
- Congress should not repeal the ACA, but if they do, they must immediately replace it with policies that protect recent gains in coverage, access to services, and benefits.

## Medicaid

- A cut to Medicaid is a cut to children's health. Medicaid is a children's program—over ½ of all Medicaid recipients in North Carolina and nationally are children.
- Current proposals to block grant Medicaid or implement per capita spending limits would result in massive funding cuts and weakened standards for the quality of care.
- Medicaid helps to ensure babies are born safely and healthy. Medicaid covers over 40 percent of the births in our state and is a key component in our state's efforts to reduce infant mortality.
- Currently, children on Medicaid are guaranteed all medically necessary services. Changing Medicaid into a block grant program or per capita capped program would eliminate this critical protection.
- Medicaid is best insurance program for children with disabilities and other special needs, because federal law requires every state Medicaid program to provide all "medically necessary" services.