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**Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing on Securing the Children’s Health Insurance Program**  
*As Prepared for Delivery*

During this busy month, it’d be easy for casual watchers of political news to get lost in a jumble of Washington lingo and acronyms. The continuing resolution, the debt ceiling, CSR payments, the NDAA, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, whose funding authorization runs out in a matter of weeks.

It is vital that the Congress springs into action in the days ahead to reauthorize CHIP’s funding. This program is a lifeline for nearly nine million children. It’s a source of profound relief for parents in Oregon and across the country, like the single mom who works multiple jobs, pays the bills and handles life’s many challenges on her own. The last thing she needs is a government letter stamped “NOTICE OF TERMINATION” explaining that her sick kids are on their own because CHIP’s funding has run out.

She’s already juggling a lot -- she’s not reading page A17 of the morning newspaper each day and decoding that Washington lingo to determine if and when Congress will act. She’s sitting in her kitchen, that scary termination letter is all she has to go by, and she wants to know how she’ll figure a way out of this mess.

That’s the prospect families across the country are facing in a matter of weeks if Congress doesn’t act. Kids who desperately need care might not get it. States will be required to start planning for the worst. That means enrollment freezes, belt-tightening and emergency steps to try and preserve care for the kids currently in the program. But a vulnerable child not yet enrolled in CHIP might have to wait until Congress gets its act together. At best that will leave families with a mountain of stress, anxiety and heartache. At worst, it’s a life and death proposition for some of the most vulnerable kids out there.

So today the Finance Committee will discuss the leading health care issue Congress needs to address this fall. Congress created CHIP with one goal in mind: to make sure no American child falls through the cracks of a health care system with far too many. In the coming weeks, the Finance Committee has an opportunity to lead the way by creating a strong, bipartisan agreement that upholds CHIP’s promise to families and gives them security for years to come.

Personally, I’m optimistic about this committee’s chances because of the leadership of our chairman. Chairman Hatch had a foundational role in the creation of CHIP, working in a bipartisan way with his late, great friend, Senator Ted Kennedy.

In the decades since they led the Congress to create CHIP, the percentage of kids in America living without health coverage has fallen from nearly 14 percent to less than 5 percent. Chairman Hatch and Senator Kennedy offered proof that leaders with fierce disagreements can find common ground when it comes to big health care challenges. This month the Finance Committee will have an opportunity to show that's still possible 20 years later.

It's important for Congress to take action soon. There's no kicking this can down the road with a short-term bill. And this cannot wait until December. Because states run their programs differently, some will run out of funding earlier than others. And in that time, no family should face the panic of being unable to get the care their sick child needs.

As I wrap up, one point on how important it is to have CHIP and Medicaid working side-by-side. For American kids and families – particularly those families working hard every day to climb into the middle class – CHIP adds a level of security to their health care above and beyond Medicaid. CHIP can only work if Medicaid works.

So let's do the hard work now, colleagues, and uphold this body's promise to America's kids and their families. Today this Committee is going to hear from a witness panel that knows CHIP from A to Z – a mother whose child counts on this program, an official who ensures CHIP runs smoothly in her state, and an independent expert who knows this program inside and out.

I hope that this hearing will be an opportunity for Senators on both sides to learn about and discuss this critical health care program, and sets the stage for the work to come. I'm confident that in short order Congress can pass a strong and bipartisan extension of CHIP that will last for many years – and that the Finance Committee can lead the way to get the job done.

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