

American Academy of Pediatrics Utah Chapter



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The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senate
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Dear Senator Hatch:

First, thank you for your ongoing commitment to fixing our broken health care system and for your past leadership on children's health issues. Your success in working across the aisle to find solutions for Utah's kids makes you an indispensable player in this crucial national health reform effort.

As pediatricians, we see on a daily basis how the current system fails our kids – which is why we are writing to urge you to support the policy provisions in the current proposals that will help Utah families afford and keep coverage. Specifically, sliding scale premium subsidies for lower income families would prevent a significant number of uninsured kids from falling through the cracks. Dependable insurance helps kids get the checkups and preventive care they need to stay healthy and allows them to visit us, their doctors, when illness strikes. As you know, covering uninsured children is fiscally responsible – it helps our state spend health dollars wisely, on preventive care and management rather than expensive emergency room care. For example, just one visit to the emergency room for an asthma attack can cost more than covering a child through the CHIP program for an entire year.

We also urge you to support changes to the insurance market that would prevent insurers from shutting children out of coverage. Currently, kids can be denied coverage for a variety of reasons -- even for something as minor as a history of acne. Children with chronic conditions or special health care needs are especially vulnerable to such practices. We hope you will help stop insurers from denying policies to those among us who need care the most – our children.

Further, we hope you will support health reform policies that address the unacceptable quality gaps that compromise children's health. A recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that children receive optimal, recommended care less than half of the time. The front-running proposals would set quality standards for children enrolled in public programs and create incentives for medical providers to follow established care guidelines, ensuring that our kids get the right care at the right time.

At the same time, health reform should address the shortage of providers who see children in public programs, which is declining as a result of low reimbursement rates. Pediatricians – the doctors on the frontlines – should be compensated fairly for the hard work they do in helping Utah kids thrive.

Finally, health reform that invests in kids' health is cost-effective. Access to early and continuous pediatric care prevents and addresses physical and behavioral health conditions that can impair a child's emotional and academic progress. Indeed, investing in kids' health is a down-payment on our future health and prosperity.

Thank you again for your leadership and focus on enhancing the health of Utah's kids.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Karen Buchi MD in black ink.

Karen Buchi, MD, FAAP
President

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey C. Schmidt in black ink.

Jeffrey C. Schmidt, MD, FAAP
Past President

Handwritten signature of Claudia Fruin MD in black ink.

Claudia Fruin, MD, FAAP
President-Elect

KC:co

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