

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted today to ensure that the nearly 19,000 local children currently enrolled in New York's children's health insurance program (CHPlus) will maintain their health care coverage and ensure higher quality care for seniors.

"In the richest country in the world it is simply unforgivable that there are children, many of them with two working parents, who go without essential health care," **said Arcuri**. "Today, I voted for necessary legislation to maintain health care coverage for millions of American children, but I believe we can -- and must -- do better. We can not stop at maintaining the status quo - we must reduce the number of uninsured children in this country. In the coming year, I will continue to fight for legislation that strengthens the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and ensures coverage for all eligible children. Providing quality health care to our nation's children is nothing less than an investment in our future."

The Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP Extension Act (S. 2499), which passed the House of Representatives today, extends SCHIP through March 31, 2009, and provides additional funding for the states to ensure that no children currently enrolled will be dropped from their coverage.

S.2499's Medicare provisions ensure that seniors and people with disabilities can continue to see the doctors of their choice by blocking a scheduled 10.1% payment cut to doctors on January 1, 2008, and replacing it with a 0.5% increase through June 30, 2008.

The Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP Extension Act also extends critical support for rural health care providers and physicians. It extends key provisions to physicians practicing in physician shortage areas, and includes other assistance for rural doctors and hospitals to ensure quality health care in rural areas. The legislation provides reasonable cost reimbursement for clinical lab tests performed by certain small rural hospitals as part of their outpatient services through June 30, 2008 - making sure life-saving diagnostic tests are available in rural areas.

S.2499 also provides \$15 million to State Health Insurance Assistance Programs and \$5 million for Area Agencies on Aging and Aging Disability Resource Centers for beneficiary outreach and assistance and helping seniors sort through the confusing Part D private insurance plans instituted by the Administration.

This fall, Arcuri voted repeatedly for bipartisan legislation to strengthen SCHIP and provide health care to over 10 million children nationwide, including 396,042 children currently enrolled in New York's SCHIP program, and extend coverage to an additional 268,000 eligible New York children who are not enrolled. Unfortunately, President Bush twice vetoed this legislation.

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