

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted tonight for legislation to provide health care to 11 million children nationwide, including 396,042 children enrolled in New York's SCHIP program.

"As a father, I know the worry parents face when a child gets sick and how critical health insurance is to ensure preventative care," **said Arcuri**. "The CHAMP Act will help hard-working Americans keep their families healthy by reauthorizing the SCHIP program and expanding states' ability to reach out and cover millions more children. It is unconscionable that in the richest country in the world millions of children, many from families with two working parents, are without health care."

H.R. 3162, the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act of 2007 (CHAMP Act) would reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which expires on September 30, 2007, and includes several provisions to protect and improve Medicare.

The bill would reauthorize SCHIP for 6 million children and give states necessary tools and incentives to reach the 5 million additional, currently-uninsured, children who are eligible for, but not enrolled in the program – covering a total of 11 million children. Created in 1997, SCHIP has cut the number of uninsured children by one-third in the last decade. New York has reduced the number of uninsured children in the state by 40% from 1997 to 2005.

"All too often emergency rooms are serving as the primary care doctors for millions of uninsured children, increasing costs and straining our health care system," **Arcuri said**. "By providing preventative care we can stop illnesses before they get to the emergency room. Children are our future and their health and well-being must be a national priority."

The CHAMP Act would ensure the continued coverage of the 396,042 children enrolled in New York's SCHIP program, Child Health Plus (CHPlus). New York State would see an increase of \$49.9 million from its allotment last year, allowing it to reach out to children in families with incomes under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level who remain uninsured. The bill would also provide the State with a new option to cover additional children who are aging out of Medicaid and SCHIP. There are currently nearly 400,000 uninsured children in New York, 300,000 of which are Medicaid and SCHIP eligible.

**The CHAMP Act would continue CHPlus coverage for nearly 19,000 local children.**

**CHPlus coverage by county in July 2007:**

- Broome – 2,956
- Cayuga – 1,550
- Chenango – 909
- Cortland – 1,116
- Herkimer – 1,935
- Oneida – 5,259
- Ontario – 1,678
- Otsego – 1,291
- Seneca – 614
- Tioga – 703
- Tompkins - 986

The CHAMP Act also improves Medicare for 44 million seniors and people with disabilities by stopping a scheduled 10% payment cut to doctors and reversing recent attempts to privatize Medicare by phasing out overpayments to private plans. The bill improves Medicare by expanding benefits through new preventive benefits and improved access to providers, expanding programs that assist low-income seniors with out-of-pocket costs, and protecting rural communities' access to health care.

New York's poorest Medicare beneficiaries - more than 547,500 of them - will be protected with limits on out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs, including those in home and community care settings.

Existing overpayments to private "Medicare Advantage" plans cost American taxpayers tens of billions of dollars. According to nonpartisan analysts, private plans are paid, on average, 12% more than traditional Medicare – and overpayments to certain plans exceed 50%. By phasing out these overpayments, this bill extends Medicare solvency by three years and protects seniors and people with disabilities from having to pay these higher monthly premiums. These overpayments in New York amount to \$709 million for FY 2007 alone.

H.R. 3162 includes a \$3 billion rural package that sustains the rural health care safety net, extending for two years important add-on payments for hospitals, doctors and other rural providers who care for Medicare beneficiaries.

The CHAMP Act also includes explicit language stating that no funds provided by this legislation can be used to provide benefits to illegal immigrants. This language was included at the request of Arcuri and others who sent a letter to House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman John Dingell (D-MI) yesterday seeking this clarification.

The CHAMP Act is strongly supported by national health care advocacy groups, including the AARP, American Medical Association, Catholic Health Association, and National Rural Health Association, as well as Governor Eliot Spitzer.

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