

Dear (legislator),

On behalf of the children of our state, we want to thank you for your service to South Carolina. When you return to Columbia in January, we recognize that you and your colleagues will face some of the toughest budgetary decisions that our state has ever encountered. Our organization, Focus on Kids, is asking that you make children's healthcare the number one priority in your deliberations.

As you can see from the list on the following page, Focus on Kids has brought together diverse children's organizations, faith-based groups, and other advocates for the sole purpose of making children's issues a priority in South Carolina. Our mission is to protect and improve the lives of our state's most valuable asset, our youngest citizens, by promoting policies that will optimize their success. We are contacting you today on their behalf and asking you to join us by ensuring that their voices will not be lost during the budget debate. We are asking you to lead the effort to ensure that the needs of children are a top priority when tough decisions must be made.

One of the most important investments you can make while working over the next session is ensuring that all of our children have the opportunity to grow up healthy so they can become productive citizens. For this reason the undersigned groups, representing thousands of your friends and neighbors, are making a simple request: protect children's healthcare.

It is critical that reductions are not made in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid program. Over the past decade these health care programs have proven to be a successful investment in the healthcare of our children. Not only does it make moral sense to keep them funded, it also makes fiscal sense. The federal match for both Medicaid and CHIP allows our doctors, hospitals and health clinics to provide needed services and spends money in our local communities to support jobs and the economy. Maintaining full funding for CHIP and Medicaid just makes sense for now and our future. Currently, between 60,000 and 137,000 of our state's children do not have health insurance. Cuts in either of these programs would make these numbers grow exponentially.

Children are our most vulnerable citizens, and their well-being depends on the actions that you will take during next year's session. Focus on Kids is committed to protecting the health and welfare of our children, especially in times of limited resources. As our elected leader, we strongly urge you to help maintain the viability of these programs by voting to keep CHIP and Medicaid fully funded. Do it for our state, but more importantly, do it for our children.

If you have any questions, or if we can serve as a resource for you, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you again, and we look forward to working together with you on this most important issue—our children.

Sincerely yours,

Gail R. Kinard
Coordinator
Focus on Kids
(803)799-1113, ext. 112

Partner Organizations that Join With Us in this Effort

A Child's Haven
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Columbia
Boy Scouts of America, Indian Waters Council
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Midlands
Children Come First
Children Unlimited, a Division of Family Service Center of SC

Children's Attention Home, Inc.
Children's Hospital of Greenville Hospital System University Medical Center
Clarity, Inc.
Columbia Urban League
Communities in Schools of the Midlands
Dee Norton Low Country Children's Center
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (Chapters include: Charleston Alumnae, Chesterfield County Alumnae, Columbia Alumnae, Nu Sigma Chapter, Charleston Southern University, Xi-Iota City-Wide, Richland County Alumnae)
Dillon County First Steps
Dickerson Center for Children
Elizabeth Pettigrew Durant Children's Center
Family Connection of South Carolina, Inc.
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health of S.C.
Foothills Alliance, Anderson
Girls Incorporated of Greater Columbia
Greenville Children's Hospital
Greenville County Recreation District
Harvest Hope Food Bank
Helping Hands, Inc.
Interfaith Community Services of SC, Inc.
Juvenile Diabetes Foundation
Lancaster County First Steps
League of Women Voters of South Carolina
LEER Family Outreach
Lutheran Family Services
March of Dimes South Carolina Chapter
National Association of Social Workers, S.C. Chapter
New Horizon Family Health Services, Inc.
Parenting Partners
Parents Anonymous of S.C., Inc.
Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault
Perinatal Awareness for Successful Outcomes (PASOs Program)
Prevent Child Abuse Pee Dee
Save the Children
South Carolina Afterschool Alliance
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
South Carolina Association of School Psychologists
South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
South Carolina Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
South Carolina Child Abuse Medical Response System
South Carolina Children's Hospital Collaborative
South Carolina Christian Action Council
South Carolina Fair Share
South Carolina Foster Parents Association
South Carolina Friends of Juvenile Justice
South Carolina NAACP
South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Centers
South Carolina Primary Health Care Association
St. Peter's Catholic Church-Office of Hispanic Ministries
The Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health of S.C.
The Nurturing Center
Trident United Way
United Way of Greenville County
United Way of South Carolina
United Way of the Midlands
YWCA of Greenville

Advocate Partners

Becky Airheart

Jocelyn Brannon

Margaret Brantley

Lora Bryson

Shelly Francis

Marion Kelly

Carmen Landy

Rick Noble

Libba Patterson

Jeremey Poindexter

Elizabeth Quackenbush

Olga Rosa, MD FAAP

Maria Gonda Smoak

Eve Moredock Stacey

Libby Sweatt-Lambert

Dottie Suggs

Catherine Warner