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New Report Finds Maryland's Progress in Securing Health Care Coverage for Children Has Stalled

BALTIMORE, MD—A new report by Georgetown University Center for Children and Families found Maryland's historic progress in securing health care coverage for children has stalled recently, with more than 59,000 state children remaining without insurance in 2013.

A substantial number of the children going without coverage in Maryland live in rural areas (10%). Many of these children are eligible for the Maryland Children's Health Program or Medicaid but are not enrolled because their families don't know about the program or need help overcoming barriers to coverage.

"We can do better for our kids," said Matthew Celentano, deputy director of Health Care for All. "We need to cut red-tape and make it easier for families to sign their children up for coverage."

The report found, in the most recent two-year period examined, that the uninsured rate for children remained fairly static, an indication that progress may be slowing.

"Without a renewed commitment to children's health coverage, we are concerned that the progress we've made for children will stall," said Joan Alker, Executive Director of the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families. "States rely on federal funding to serve uninsured children and it's crucial that those funds continue to support these successful efforts."

The Maryland Children's Health Program is funded through the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Funding for CHIP will run out next year if Congress fails to pass legislation to extend funding. Maryland stands to lose \$110 million in federal funds if Congress does not act.

If Congress does not act, funding for CHIP in Maryland could run out as early as next summer. "It is very important that Congress act promptly to extend CHIP funding," said Neha Trivedi, health policy director for Advocates for Children and Youth. "Our state has made significant progress in reducing the number of uninsured children since CHIP was implemented in the late 90s. Moving forward we want to make sure that all Maryland children can get the health care they need to succeed in school and in life."

Families who need help enrolling in Medicaid or CHIP can call Maryland Health Connection at 1-855-642-8572 or visit www.marylandhealthconnection.gov. Help with enrollment is also available at local health departments or the local department of social services. In person assistance is also available through the six regional Connector Entities whose contact information is available at the Maryland Health Connection website.

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Advocates for Children and Youth is a statewide non-profit focused on improving the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement. We champion solutions to child welfare, education, health, and juvenile justice issues, positioning us to influence the full spectrum of youth experiences. This multi-issue platform helps us to improve the entirety of children's worlds—the systems they touch, the people they interact with, and the environment where they live. www.acy.org

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