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## Let's help the children

SCHIP provides care for kids, won't harm seniors

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Most of Brevard County's local representatives in Congress did not vote for the State Children's Health Insurance Program bill, better known as SCHIP, recently in Washington.

SCHIP provides affordable health insurance to children, with premiums based on income levels, but expires Sept. 30.

This program helps fund Florida's state-run KidCare program. We are frustrated the small details of the bill, which can be fixed, may stop this proven and successful program.

The combined House and Senate version of the SCHIP bill will be voted on in the next few weeks. It is our obligation to make an impact on our representatives in Washington, and make it clear that we want all children to have the opportunity of health insurance.

How our senators and representatives vote on this bill will tell how they take care of the weakest people in society.

Everyone agrees that healthcare for children is an excellent idea. It keeps children out of busy emergency rooms and lowers the cost of health care for everyone.

This program does not provide free healthcare. It is insurance with co-pays and deductibles based on income, and takes children regular insurance doesn't. For example, KidCare insures children with pre-existing conditions.

Many parents do not have a health insurance option at work and are faced with the choice of paying their rent or paying for a doctor visit. Today, more of our retired seniors are now raising grandchildren and private insurance is too costly on a fixed income.

We need lawmakers to fix this bill so they can support it. All the objections to the program should be quite easily solved. For instance:

- Some states allow adults to be covered. This is done with waivers. Solution: Don't allow the waivers.
- Some critics don't want to cover undocumented immigrants. Solution: Make that clear in the wording of the bill.

We want our lawmakers to know that we hold them accountable for fixing the bill so they can support it.

This great country is the richest nation in the world. We can and should have healthcare for our children.

Congregations for Community Action, a multi-denominational faith-based organization in South Brevard County, has invited senators, representatives, the governor's office, KidCare, local health representatives and AARP to a meeting to discuss the issue.

AARP will explain that it supports SCHIP and that the program doesn't take any money or services from seniors.

This event is scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Melbourne.

Please contact SCHIP opponents -- Sen. Mel Martinez, R-Orlando, and Reps. Dave Weldon, R-Indialantic, and Tom Feeney, R-Oviedo -- and tell them to pass and support a strong SCHIP bill for our children.

We are pleased that Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Orlando, voted yes for SCHIP.

Please thank him and ask him to urge others to resolve their differences and say yes to the children.

To find out more, go to [www.coverallchildren.org](http://www.coverallchildren.org).

***Tami Yntema helps lead Congregations for Community Action and is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Melbourne.***