



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JOE STRAUS
SPEAKER

December 1, 2017

Mr. Charles Smith, Executive Commissioner
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
P.O. Box 13247
Austin, Texas 78711-3247

Dear Commissioner Smith:

Thank you for your letter dated November 20, 2017, regarding the need to ensure the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) continues to operate in light of Congressional inaction to reauthorize the program. I appreciate your prompt attention to this critical matter, as well as your efforts to work with the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) to identify state options to preserve CHIP.

I understand you have received assurances from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that they will transfer a portion of our anticipated end-of-year redistribution in order to continue CHIP through February 2018. While I am cautiously optimistic regarding federal efforts, I do want to ensure that the state is prepared to move quickly and prudently should Congress fail to act in a timely manner.

It is my understanding that, in your conversations with the LBB, you identified another option to ensure Texas has access to federal CHIP funding in the event that reauthorization is delayed. If Congress fails to act before the end of December, or if CMS does not provide access to early redistribution funding, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) should be prepared to temporarily cease claiming enhanced match for certain children in Medicaid in order to maximize the availability of federal CHIP funding while Congress deliberates. It is my understanding that this will not increase anticipated shortfalls in the Medicaid program if Congress ultimately reauthorizes CHIP. While this mechanism cannot serve as a long-term fix, I support its use as a temporary bridge until federal funding becomes available.

Again, thank you for your prompt and deliberate response to my concerns. I look forward to continuing to work with you in the best interest of Texas's children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Straus".

Joe Straus
Speaker

cc: The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor
The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor
The Honorable John Zerwas, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Sarah Davis, Chair, Article II Subcommittee, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Richard Peña Raymond, Chair, House Human Services Committee

The Honorable Four Price, Chair, House Public Health Committee

The Honorable Charles Schwertner, Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Ursula Parks, Director, Legislative Budget Board