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***CARDIN PRAISES SENATE PASSAGE OF  
CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE BILL***  
*President Obama Has Promised to Sign the Measure*

WASHINGTON – After a nearly two-year fight to gain passage of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)**, today praised the Senate passage of the bill to reauthorize the program, saying "enactment of this measure is critical to the health and well being of America's children." The bill passed the Senate today by a vote of 66 to 32, and passed the House on January 14 by a vote of 289 to 139.

This legislation, which President Bush vetoed twice despite wide bipartisan support, will fund health care for approximately 6.7 million American children already enrolled in the program. It also will expand health care services to approximately 4 million children from low-income families who do not qualify for Medicaid and who would otherwise be uninsured. In Maryland, this bill will fully fund the 110,000 children currently enrolled in the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP). It also will provide funding to expand health coverage to approximately 42,800 Maryland children who are currently uninsured.

"Too many Americans have no insurance, but this bill takes a step in the right direction by ensuring that millions of uninsured children will have access to the health care services they need," said **Senator Cardin**, a long-time supporter of the measure.

The CHIP bill includes several of Senator Cardin's proposals, including a guaranteed dental benefit, a dental education program for parents of newborns and a new Department of Health and Human Services website and toll-free number with information about dental coverage and a list of providers.

"Dental care is an essential part of appropriate medical care," said **Senator Cardin**. "In 2007, 12-year-old Deamonte Driver from Prince George's County died from a brain infection caused by a tooth abscess. Treating a cavity takes very little time or effort, but the death of a child from tooth decay is a national tragedy we must make sure never happens again."

The CHIP bill passed by the Senate will:

- Provide an additional \$35 billion over 4-1/2 years in new funding for the CHIP program;
- Provide health care to an additional 4 million low-income children;
- Provide a guaranteed dental benefit to children enrolled in CHIP;

- Provide for mental health services; and,
- Provide a funding source by increasing the federal excise tax to 61 cents on a pack of cigarette.

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