

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 7, 2007

Dear Colleague:

More than eight million children in the United States currently lack health insurance coverage. As a consequence, many of them are unable to access preventative health care, which over time could lead to untreated health conditions or the early onset of chronic disease. Even children who have health insurance often face barriers to receiving proper medical and preventive healthcare. To ensure that all of America's children have access to basic healthcare services, we introduced S. 600, the School Based Health Clinic Establishment Act. This measure will provide much needed federal funding to support centers across the country.

School-based health centers (SBHCs) are an effective means of bringing preventative and primary care to medically underserved children and adolescents. Apart from their direct impact on improving health, they have been shown to decrease student absences and reduce academic failure related to poor health. SBHCs also tackle important health-related risks facing our nation's children, such as school violence, injury, asthma, obesity and tobacco use. Together with parents and school personnel, SBHCs play an important role in helping shape positive behaviors and developing long-term healthy lifestyles.

Approximately two million of America's youth currently have access to one of 1700 existing SBHCs in 44 states. Despite the important work they do, the centers rely predominantly on state and local funding, which has proven to be an unstable source of support. Over time, SBHCs have found themselves competing with other valuable programs for limited public health dollars. This has forced some to eliminate critical medical and mental health services or close altogether. We believe SBHCs need a consistent, dedicated stream of federal funding to support the important work they do for our nation's children.

We hope you will join us in support of the School Based Health Clinic Establishment Act of 2007. SBHCs are a vital component of the nation's healthcare safety net, helping children and adolescents stay healthy so they can achieve their full academic potential. Congress can help further that cause by ensuring that funding is available to support SBHCs work of providing basic healthcare services to all school children, regardless of their income or insurance status.

To learn more about the School Based Health Clinic Establishment Act or to sign on as a cosponsor, please contact Matt Canedy (4-5364) in Senator Smith's office or Sherry Kaiman (4-0584) in Senator Dodd's office.

Warm Regards,



Gordon H. Smith
United States Senate



Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senate