

NEA:National Education Association

Great Public Schools for Every Child

Letter to the Senate

April 10, 2008

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the National Education Association's (NEA) 3.2 million members, we convey our support for the Economic Recovery in Health Care Act of 2008 (S. 2819), introduced by Senators Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), and Edward Kennedy (D-MA).

This bill would temporarily suspend pending changes in Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) regulations that threaten the provision of essential health services to the most vulnerable among us: low-income children and families, and children with disabilities. The legislation would also provide fiscal relief to states in need, thereby helping to forestall cutbacks precipitated by deteriorating economic conditions and the consequent drop in state and local revenues available for public education and other essential services.

Medicaid is the single largest component of state spending -- nearly one-fifth of general fund expenditures. Unlike the federal government, states must balance their budgets. Consequently, when declining revenues lead to budgetary shortfalls, they must pare even undeniably essential services such as education and healthcare. By the end of this fiscal year, more than half the states will be in the red and contemplating such cuts.

This important legislation provides temporary, targeted and timely state fiscal relief. We urge you to support the Economic Recovery in Health Care Act, so the most vulnerable among us can continue to receive healthcare and other essential services in these trying economic times.

Sincerely,

Diane Shust, Director of Government Relations

Randall Moody, Manager of Federal Advocacy