

Families USA: Months late, Congress funds health care programs and leaves Dreamers in limbo

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Washington, D.C. – In an early morning vote and long overdue, Congress passed a spending bill that will authorize funding for several popular, bipartisan health care programs. Health care for Americans from all walks of life was threatened by the long gap in federal funding for community health centers, the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, and other vital programs. In addition, those impacted by Hurricane Maria, including people in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, will receive modest-levels of health care support through federal Medicaid funding. Offsets for the package included problematic cuts to the Medicare program as well as the Prevention and Public Health Fund.

Following is the statement of Frederick Isasi, executive director of Families USA:

“Congress’s bipartisan action finally ends months of anxiety and worry for families and health care providers in underserved areas across the nation, including rural and inner-city communities; and provides modest-aid hurricane-ravaged communities in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

“It is frustrating and terrible policy that Congressional leadership insisted on ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul’ by imposing cuts to Medicare and to the Prevention and Public Health Fund to pay for the continuation of important, bipartisan programs. The contrast with recently passed, unfunded tax cuts totaling more than a trillion

dollars is striking and deeply saddening.

“Though it took far too long, we are pleased Congress finally extended funding for community health centers, the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program and other important and uncontroversial health care programs. We are relieved that these programs are finally funded; but we are deeply troubled by the dysfunctional lapse in funding; it never should have happened.

“Lawmakers also made a common-sense move to extend CHIP funding for a total of 10 years, ensuring that this program will continue to provide life-saving access to health care for babies, moms, and families for years to come.

“We are gravely disappointed by President Trump and Congress’s continued inaction to end the terrible uncertainty for our daughters and sons who rely on DACA. President Trump and Congress are putting our immigrant children, who have always called this country home, in the unconscionable position of being deported. President Trump created this crisis by ending DACA five months ago and demanding that Congress legislate this issue; it has not. As both parties have recognized, these young Dreamers are part of the fabric of our nation. Congress must end the nightmare for these children and their families of living in legal limbo. They deserve permanent status and Congress must act immediately to create a legal path for our immigrant children.”