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## Insuring a healthy future

### Fate of plan to double funds for kid's health care program hinges on House

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Desert Sun Washington Bureau  
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WASHINGTON - When her 14-year-old son recently hurt his back while throwing a discus at school, Elizabeth Robles could not take him to the doctor.

A substitute teacher who lives in Indio, Robles has no health insurance for herself or her family.

"I've been without insurance forever," she said.

Robles, who plans to enroll her son in a state health insurance program, takes comfort in recent congressional efforts to double the funding that provides health insurance for 6 million low-income kids, including thousands in the Coachella Valley.

About 4.3 million children are enrolled in California's public insurance programs, according to the California HealthCare Foundation. Much of the federal funding for those programs come from the State Children's Health Insurance Program set to expire Oct. 1.

Despite these efforts, about 800,000 children in California are still uninsured, the foundation says.

In Riverside County, about 57,000 children lack health insurance, according to the Inland Congregations United for Change, a group of religious leaders involved in grassroots community organizing.

The group was among hundreds of clergy and parents organized by the PICO National Network that lobbied Congress in March to increase federal funding for children's health insurance to \$60 billion.

"This is a moral issue," said Zachary Hoover, a deacon at University Baptist Church in Palm Desert who works with the Inland Congregations United for Change. "Every kid deserves the blessing of good health."

The Inland group recently released a study of families in Coachella showing that about 16 percent of families have children on public health insurance. Still, a quarter of Coachella's children don't have health insurance.

The Senate recently agreed to spend \$50 billion over five years for the program, up from \$25 billion. The House has not yet approved its budget plan.

Robles was among the group of people in Washington asking lawmakers, including Sen. Barbara Boxer, a Rancho Mirage Democrat, to increase funding for the program.

"Hopefully, they'll do the right thing and pass it," she said. "This is for our children. They're our future leaders. What's going to happen if we don't take care of them now?"



Jennifer Soliz, The Desert Sun

Elizabeth Robles and her son Gabriel Robles, 14, say they are having trouble finding affordable health insurance. Elizabeth Robles says she is planning to enroll her son in a state health insurance program, and takes comfort in recent congressional efforts to double the funding that provides health insurance for 6 million low-income kids.

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