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ELCA Presiding Bishop Calls for Increase in Children's Health Program

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ELCA Presiding Bishop Calls for Increase in Children's Health Program 07-118-LL*

CHICAGO (ELCA) -- The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), joined leaders of 20 other national religious organizations in a letter to leaders of the U.S. Congress June 7, urging expanded funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

The religious leaders joined the People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO) National Network, and the National Council of Churches USA (NCC) in their call for action. They asked U.S. Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Finance Committee chair, and U.S. Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.), majority leader, to help produce \$50 billion in legislation to expand SCHIP.

PICO and NCC have generated more than 9,000 letters from faith communities to the Senate on SCHIP, according to a PICO news release.

"We speak from a broad range of religious traditions representing many millions of families in urging you to craft SCHIP legislation that will help our nation see a day when no child goes without treatment or relies on an emergency room for his or her primary health care," the church leader wrote.

"We ask that you fulfill the commitment Congress made to include \$50 billion over five years in additional funding for children's health. The faith community worked extraordinarily hard to see that the Senate and House included \$50 billion in new funding in the budget resolution. We want to see these funds used to support a strong SCHIP reauthorization."

PICO is a national network of faith-based community organizations working to create solutions for problems faced by communities. PICO works to increase access to health care, improve public schools, make neighborhoods safer, provide affordable housing, redevelop communities and revitalize democracy. More than 50 religious denominations and faith traditions, including the ELCA, representing more than 1 million families, are part of PICO, according to its mission statement.

"With your continued leadership we see a day when all children in our nation receive the health care they need to grow into healthy and productive members of society," the leaders concluded in their letter.

Information about PICO and the text of the religious leaders' letter is at <http://piconetwork.org/> on the PICO Web site.

More information about the ELCA's organizing ministries is at <http://www.ELCA.org/organizing> on the ELCA Web site.

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