New Studies Show ACA Benefitting Illinois Parents and Children

Chicago, IL – Today, a study issued by the Georgetown Center for Children and Families (CCF) and the Urban Institute documented that states that chose to expand Medicaid saw rates of uninsured parents drop by 33 percent, on average. The groups issued two reports about changes in the uninsured rates for both children and parents at the end of the first open enrollment period.

We are heartened to see that uninsured parents living in Medicaid expansion states like Illinois are doing much better than before the ACA. Illinois alone has enrolled more than 440,000 adults.

Unfortunately, the report on children did not show any significant change in insurance status, although the uninsured rate for children remained at historically low levels. Thanks to the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), a bipartisan program that provides coverage to families who earn too much for Medicaid, but not enough for the private marketplace, the rate has declined to 7.3 percent nationally and an even lower 3.3 percent in Illinois. Still, Illinois needs to take action to reach the remaining 101,000 plus uninsured children across the state.

Uninsured children are more likely to have difficulty accessing quality, affordable health coverage and preventive care when they need it. In fact, uninsured children were nearly 27% less likely than insured children to have had a routine checkup in the past year, inhibiting their ability to reach their potential.

The ACA authorized CHIP through 2019 but funding runs out the end of 2015. Representative Frank Pallone (D-NJ), along with several cosponsors including Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), has introduced HR 5364 - the CHIP Extension and Improvement Act of 2014 to extend funding through 2019.

“If Congress does not reauthorize CHIP, Illinois would lose $106 million/ year in federal funding and lose the gains we’ve made insuring Illinois children,” added EverThrive IL Executive Director Janine Lewis.

Further, reaching the remaining uninsured in the coming years will require more outreach and enrollment efforts, especially targeting low-income and immigrant families. ACA Navigators will be crucial in helping to manage and address the language, education, and existing health barriers facing these groups.

The CCF and Urban Institute reports provide valuable insight into how the ACA is already increasing insurance access to American families. “We can only fill these remaining gaps, specifically for children, if lawmakers commit to reauthorizing the CHIP program and investing in navigators,” Lewis concluded.

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EverThrive Illinois works to improve the health of women, children, and families over the lifespan through community engagement, partnerships, policy analysis, education, and advocacy. Learn more at www.ilmaternal.org