

*August 3, 2009*

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) supported an important step towards reforming the health care system with Friday’s passage of America’s Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

“We need health reform that lowers costs and provides America’s families with the security that they’ll get the care they need from the doctor they choose,” said Rep. McNerney. “Without reform, the average family will see their health care costs increase significantly every year. Today, however, marks an important step towards finding a uniquely American solution to a broken system.”

Congressman McNerney, a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, authored two important amendments to the bill that will help ensure America’s children have access to health care.

The Congressman’s first amendment improves the Children’s Health Insurance Program, known as CHIP. Currently, some states enforce a waiting period before a child can enroll in CHIP. This amendment ensures that children have ready access to health coverage by eliminating the waiting period when a parent loses his or her job. The amendment also waives

the waiting period if a child loses coverage because of a parent's reduction in work hours, the elimination of retiree health benefits, or if the cost of insurance exceeds 10 percent of a family's income.

"During a time when many Americans are struggling to make ends meet, it's essential to ensure that children still have every opportunity to establish strong, healthy lives," said Rep. McNerney. "Already, the Children's Health Insurance Program provides health insurance coverage for nearly 11 million children. Helping children to enroll when their family is going through tough times is a common sense improvement to the program."

The Congressman's second amendment pertains to the Center for Quality Improvement, which is established by the bill to identify and develop best practices to improve the quality and delivery of health care services and lower costs. As initially written, the bill directs the Center for Quality Improvement to prioritize best practices initiatives in several areas, including the reduction of health care associated infections and the improvement of emergency room care and obstetrics. The amendment offered by Congressman McNerney adds pediatrics to this list and allows the Center to direct its efforts towards initiatives that will reduce health disparities as well as chronic illness among children.

America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 now awaits consideration by the full House of Representatives.

