May 20, 2011

Dear House and Senate Budget Negotiators,

As advocates for diverse communities across Washington State, we continue to oppose the Senate’s approach to Apple Health for Kids.

These cuts are profoundly unjust. They penalize a group of children for circumstances beyond their control. The effects will be felt among some of the poorest kids in our state: children whose lack of opportunities for education and health will put them well behind life’s starting line. These kids are all too frequently children of color.

Because a child’s educational achievement depends on her health, Apple Health for Kids plays a key role in fulfilling the state’s duty to educate its children. Prevention is the best cost containment. For the cost of a single admission to the hospital ER for an asthma attack, we can provide coverage through Apple Health for Kids to a child for nearly two years.

With a single, streamlined enrollment process and the same benefits for all kids, the efficiencies in Apple Health for Kids will earn the state $80 million from the federal government over 2011-2013. This bonus award is more than four times greater than the savings assumed in the Senate approach.

Some legislators are defending the Senate’s approach to Apple Health for Kids by deploying the word “reform.” Genuine reform makes something more efficient, transparent or fair. Taking health care away from poor, undocumented children is not reform -- it’s a giant leap backwards.

We urge you to reject the cuts in the Senate’s budget and SB 5929, and to adopt the approach that the House and Senate agreed on: raising premiums on undocumented families who are most likely to afford it, those that are 200% of the federal poverty level and above; and allowing financial sponsorships to help ensure that cost isn’t a barrier to health care.

The state budget is a moral document. A common value holds true across our state, in every community: that children should be protected from harm. We urge you to join us in standing strong for Apple Health for Kids in good times and in bad.

Sincerely,
Cc: State Senators, State Representatives, Staff

For more information, contact Jen Estroff, Children’s Alliance Government Relations Director at 509-859-2012 or jen@childrensalliance.org.