

(Washington, DC) – Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today voted to extend and improve the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to protect existing coverage and provide states with funding to provide coverage for 4 million additional children. The bill is similar to legislation that Holt helped pass twice in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, but President Bush vetoed.

"Sending a child to the emergency room is not an alternative to having comprehensive health insurance," Holt said. "Especially at a time when millions of families are facing economic hardships, we must ensure that children have the care they need."

SCHIP currently provides health care coverage for more than 7 million low-income children who otherwise would go without care. President-elect Obama has signaled his support for expanding SCHIP.

New Jersey uses its SCHIP funds to run a program called FamilyCare. Currently, 150,000 children and approximately 100,000 low-income parents are enrolled in New Jersey's program.

Holt also noted that the bill would provide parity for mental health for children.

"I long have fought for mental health parity, and was pleased that last year we could improve mental health coverage for private insurance plans and Medicare. I am encouraged that we have now extended this to the SCHIP program."

###