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**A Statement from Voices for Utah Children on the
Third Anniversary of CHIPRA
CHIPRA: An Accomplishment to Be Proud Of**

Salt Lake City –February 4, is the third anniversary of bipartisan legislation that strengthened the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This anniversary provides a great opportunity to reflect on our progress and highlight the important successes we have to celebrate when it comes to extending health coverage to all children.

In the three years since its reauthorization, the law has helped drive the number of uninsured children under 18 down by one million across the nation. Lincoln Nehring, Sr. Health Policy Analyst with Voices for Utah Children stated, “This progress, which has brought the children’s uninsured rate in this country to its lowest level on record, is even more striking given that childhood poverty and adult uninsured rates jumped sharply over the same time period.”

CHIP and Medicaid have been a stable source of health care coverage during uncertain times. With a weak economic recovery that has been slow to add new jobs with access to employer-based insurance, Medicaid and CHIP continue to be key sources of coverage for children. Thanks to CHIP and Medicaid, today more than 200,000 Utah children can get the checkups and preventive care they need to stay healthy and see the doctor when they get sick or injured.

The CHIP reauthorization law is helping government work smarter and respond better to the needs of children and families. An innovative performance bonus provision included in the CHIP reauthorization law has successfully encouraged states to reach out to more eligible children, making CHIP and Medicaid more accessible to families who qualify.

Utah has already taken steps to reduce bureaucratic red tape for families applying for CHIP and Medicaid, making it easier for eligible kids to get enrolled and stay enrolled in valuable health care coverage. During this year’s legislative session, lawmakers will consider legislation to make the eligibility process more efficient. Voices for Utah Children appreciates the efforts of Rep. Dean Sanpei to pass HB 98 Continuous Eligibility for Medicaid, which would allow the state to further align its Medicaid and CHIP rules and help improve the quality of care that kids receive.

Making these improvements also helps CHIP and Medicaid to strengthen our economy, an important consideration. Governor Herbert and the Legislature are making tough budget decisions for 2012-2013. By making improvements to and enrolling more children in CHIP, Utah can qualify for an annual Performance Bonus, which puts federal tax dollars back into our economy and protects local jobs. In 2011, 23 states qualified for the bonus and the total amount of the bonus between those states meant that nearly \$300 million was put back into local economies. We're working with state leaders to help Utah qualify for the bonus in 2012.

Kids need health coverage 365 days a year. We are encouraged by the progress that has been made but recognize that there is still more to do. We are working with state leaders to ensure that CHIP and Medicaid help even more uninsured children get the care they need to grow and thrive in 2012. Getting children the health coverage they need is a problem we can solve. Let's celebrate this anniversary by committing to keep building on its success.

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Voices for Utah Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan child advocacy organization that advocates for public policies and programs to improve the lives of children and families. We believe that all children should be safe and healthy, ready for school, and live in families who can meet their needs and invest in their future.

www.utahchildren.org