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Voices for Ohio's Children

## **Youth Unveil Band-Aid Campaign to Support SCHIP**

### *Youth Advocates Urge Congress and President to **Keep Kids Covered:** Support Children's Health Insurance Program*

**Columbus, OH** - Youth members of the Ohio Federal Budget Coalition today unveiled a "band-aid" campaign intended to push Congress and the President to support reauthorization and expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Representing the 156,000 uninsured children in Ohio, COHHIO's Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) homeless and transitional youth are seeking 156,000 signatures on "band-aid" petitions from other youth and adults across Ohio in support of expansion of the SCHIP program to the House level of \$50 billion. "Congress must follow through on its commitment to finance the \$50 billion reserve fund as part of SCHIP reauthorization," said Angela Lariviere, COHHIO's Youth Advocacy Director.

President Bush has threatened to veto a congressional expansion of SCHIP, which is expected after the Senate and House work out details of a bill in conference committee. Currently under the House and Senate plans, between 4 and 5 million children will gain coverage respectively. "Thousands of uninsured Ohio children will gain health insurance if SCHIP reauthorization includes the increase in funding," said Lariviere "On the other hand, a presidential veto could jeopardize coverage for thousands of America's children. The \$50 billion in additional funding for SCHIP and Medicaid would begin to help cover the 156,000 uninsured children in our state."

As Congress moves into deliberations in conference committee, youth from YEP and the Ohio Federal Budget Coalition are calling on members to support reauthorization and expansion of SCHIP at the House's proposed level of \$50 billion. "Through reauthorization and expansion of SCHIP, Congress will make certain that fewer Ohio children and families are faced with difficult and devastating health care decisions," said Lariviere. Youth from the YEP program will seek members support by delivering to Congress signatures from Ohio youth and adults on "band-aid" petitions that will be collected in August and September. The deadline for reauthorization of SCHIP is September 30th.

The Ohio Federal Budget Coalition is a statewide coalition of organizations committed to a federal budget that supports the needs of low and moderate income Ohioans. The Youth Empowerment Program empowers youth by increasing opportunities to take control of their situations while building self esteem and improving the quality of life through advocacy,

leadership and education.