



A Union of Professionals

## AFT News Release

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### **Statement by Antonia Cortese, Executive Vice President, American Federation of Teachers**

*(Statement supporting the new Campaign for Children's Health Care, which will raise public awareness about the need for healthcare coverage for all children. More than 9 million children have inadequate or no healthcare coverage.)*

Evidence and common sense tell us that healthy children are better learners. Children with untreated health conditions have more trouble concentrating in class and have higher absenteeism than children with access to good healthcare. Our teachers, especially those in low-income areas, deal with this troubling problem every day. And it's magnified by the fact that there are fewer and fewer school nurses. Unfortunately, school nurses are considered a luxury, not a necessity, in these tight budget times.

After years of publicity and concern about students' academic achievement, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which sets some important goals for what we expect of our students. But children must be healthy and physically able to come to school prepared to learn. If students are chronically absent because they can't get the care they need, then we are leaving our children behind.

It is a moral imperative to ensure that all children have adequate healthcare coverage.

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The AFT represents 1.3 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; nurses and healthcare workers; and federal, state and local government employees.

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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