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**STATEMENT FROM SHAY BILCHIK, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE  
CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, ON THE LAUNCH OF THE  
CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE**

Washington, DC – The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is proud to join a nonpartisan coalition of dozens of health care and children's advocacy organizations in launching *The Campaign for Children's Health Care*, to raise public awareness about the nine million uninsured children in the United States. This coming year Congress will be considering reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which currently helps provide coverage for millions of low-income children across the country.

This issue is particularly relevant for the children served by CWLA's member agencies. Time after time, studies have shown that youth in foster care experience higher rates of physical and emotional problems, including chronic medical conditions, developmental delays, and mental health problems. Many children who enter foster care arrive with preexisting physical and mental health conditions which have gone unaddressed due to a variety of reasons, including a lack of access to health care services. Once in the foster care system, access to health and mental health care plays an essential role in facilitating the potential reunification of these children with their families or successful adoption.

While specific focus needs to be given to the health care needs of the population of children in the nation's foster care system, it is equally essential that all children have access to primary and preventive health care services, so that early assessment and intervention can occur when necessary. Access to health care services plays a critical role in promoting the opportunities and experiences that children need – and deserve – to develop to their full potential.

Physical, dental, mental health and developmental services are key to easing the impact of trauma that children may experience through abuse and neglect, or any other potentially harmful environmental stressors.

Federal legislation addressing the health care needs of all children is extremely relevant to the health care of children in out-of-home care. As a participant in *The Campaign for Children's Health Care*, CWLA urges policymakers to make comprehensive, affordable health insurance coverage for all of America's children a top priority as Congress prepares to consider reauthorization of the SCHIP in 2007.

We demand that Congress take responsible action on reauthorizing the SCHIP and will work with our partners in *The Campaign for Children's Health Care* to ensure that health coverage for all children is achieved.

Since 1920, The Child Welfare League of America has been the nation's pre-eminent membership-based organization dedicated to ensuring that disadvantaged and vulnerable children are protected from harm and have the tools and resources they need to grow into the healthy and happy adults we want them to become. CWLA is the trusted authority for professionals who work with children and the only national organization with 900 public and private member agencies working across all sectors of the children's services field.

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