

**Covering Kids & Families  
Back-to-School Campaign Launch  
August 2, 2005**

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**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Good morning. Good morning! All right, now you're starting to sound like the districts. Good morning. We are thrilled to have you here to launch our Sixth Annual Back-to-School Campaign. And I want to thank you for joining us here with all of the covering kids and families. I can't tell you how excited I am as the President and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to have this incredible mix of political and health leaders, top-of-the-chart musical artists, world-class athletes, and families to share a vital message that kids need coverage and that they can get the medical care they need because low-cost or free health care is available. Now, I have some other remarks I want to make. But, I'm going to let our surgeon general kick it off. It has been such a pleasure to work with him. He has been a tremendous supporter of covering kids and families for many years. And I especially want to thank him because his Department of Maternal and Child Health has actually funded the hotline. Actually, it's not a hotline, it's a lifeline: 1-877-KIDSNOW, which is the number that all parents can go to to get information on how to get their children insured under Medicaid or SCHIP. This past January, the surgeon general declared the year 2005 the Year of the Healthy Child. And I can think of no other program than kids and families that demonstrates the ways in which we can bring together, mind, spirit, and body to ensure that all of our

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children are healthy. So it is now my pleasure to introduce our nation's top doctor, the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Richard Carmona.

**Richard Carmona, M.D., M.P.H, FACS:** Good morning, good morning. Risa, thank you so much for the nice introduction and I want to thank you for the wonderful leadership that you have provided for the country through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for many years. She has been a tireless advocate, as has the foundation, for improving the health of our children across the nation and so many other things. And I have to tell you I'm a little star struck today because I grew up in the 'hood in New York City, in Harlem, Washington Heights, South Bronx and one of my heroes, Willie Colon is sitting right here. I can't believe it, I'm up on stage with a celebrity.

It's a pleasure to be here today to help launch the Sixth Annual Covering Kids & Families Back-to-School Campaign. Every year the effort becomes bigger in what we do. The good news is that 82% of the nation's 70 million or so kids are in pretty good health. However, there are still gaps and we can never become complacent. We do improve every year, things get better, but we still need to work very hard. We've found that our children are less likely to smoke and give birth as teenagers. These are important gains in pediatric health. But there are still some troubling areas. I'm here today as surgeon general and also a person who knows first

hand what it means to be without health care coverage. I came from a poor Latino family, lived in the 'hood in New York City. My brothers and my sister and I all dropped out of high school and ran the streets. I know the tough times of having to wait in long lines for health care, of a mother who was too proud to take welfare. Going to school hungry, not getting health care when you need it and, consequently, not living up to my potential as a child because there were so many other things in the environment that distracted me from learning. We can't allow that to happen to our children. And that's what this program is all about. That's what the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and all of its partners are trying to do, to make sure that every child is healthy and maximizes their potential. To be whatever it is that they want to be and to never be held back because of a lack of health care.

As you heard, I didn't always get the health care I needed. I was lucky, it's a great country, I got a late start. I was a late bloomer. But, even as a little kid when I went astray and struggled, it was my [Inaudible] who often used to say, "Give him time, he'll be okay." It just took a long time. If you haven't gone without health care, you might not understand what uninsured families, many of them working families, suffer through and experience. Today, thanks to Medicaid and SCHIP, no child in America should have to go without health care. The good news is that health insurance options are available for uninsured kids. When parents pick

up the phone, as the doctor said it's a lifeline, not a hotline, it's a lifeline: 1-877-543-7669. Don't forget that number, it's very important. And that's why I declared 2005 the Year of the Healthy Child. From free dental care to birth to early childhood and adolescence, the health and well being of children is so important. I also want to make this year one that all children have the health care they need when they need it. We owe it to our children to provide them with the care they need to grow up healthy and live to their greatest potential. Part of my job as surgeon general is to make sure that parents have the information they need to keep their children healthy. And that's why I support the Covering Kids & Families Back-to-School Campaign.

Support really is an understatement. Even advocacy is an understatement. I am truly passionate about this because this is an extraordinary program that costs very little, yet it has huge potential to shape the lives of our children as they grow. The fact is that the number of uninsured children in this country continues to be in the millions. Almost 8.5 million children. These children are less likely to get the medical care they need when they need it. And they're also less likely to learn. They're going to be absent from school a lot more. They're going to have problems in school that they don't have to have. It doesn't have to be this way. More than seven out of every 10 uninsured children are eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage available through

Medicaid and SCHIP. In each state it has a different name, but that's unimportant. All you need to know is the number to call to get the information you need for your state. Parents, now is the time. Call toll free: 1-877-KIDSNOW to find out if your uninsured kids are eligible for low-cost or free health care. It's one call that will make a difference in your life and the life of your child. And I'm going to say that again, this time in Spanish: Padres, este es el momento. [Spanish Spoken] 1-877-543-7669. [Spanish Spoken]. The bottom line is that when children receive good health care, they can do almost anything and have unlimited potential. Thank you all for your passion, for your commitment, for being here to support this effort today. It's going to take all of us to move this agenda forward so that we assure that every child has access to health care and therefore the potential to grow and develop to their fullest potential. Thank you so much.

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Let's give the surgeon general a hand. He has a plane to catch and many lives to try and save today, so we are going to let him get his plane. I want to do something a little different. I want to ask the kids over here who are from the DC4 soccer camp to just let me know if you are as excited about having Freddy Adu and Jaime Moreno here as I am. Will you just say yes if you are? Let's give them a great round of applause.

You know, we have a wonderful partnership this year with the soccer camp and also DC United who has been just

terrific in having their two stars here for us today. You know, Freddy Adu was a 16-year-old prodigy who has now turned into a superstar in just two seasons. And of course, Jaime Moreno is a member of four all-star teams and is the force, the offensive force on DC United. And I could go on and on and maybe even demonstrate how to do a bicycle kick. But their coach is waiting for them and wants to make sure that they are on time for practice. So, I'm going to ask you to join me in welcoming Freddy and Jaime.

**Freddy Adu:** Thank you, doctor. I just want to say thanks to everybody for being here. And thanks to all the young people for taking time out in trying to make this work, and all the older people, too. You know, I just want you guys to know that I really appreciate everything that these guys are doing right here to make this happen. From my own personal experience, I could stand here and tell you of old days, when I first came to this country. I didn't have the best of lives. My mom had to work two jobs. The last thing I wanted her to do was to worry about how she was going to pay for my health care when I got injured. I was young, but it wasn't the greatest feeling in the world knowing that your mom had to work two jobs and did not have time for you. So you had to be careful with what you did because you didn't want her to worry about anything else. As a 16-year-old, when I looked at life, even if I wasn't a professional athlete, I know that being a teenager, kids have a lot of energy. They

wanna get out there, play, have fun and all of these other things. But when they don't have health care, it's kind of hard for them to do these kinds of things. They might still do it and then get hurt or injured. But they have no health care to cover them. And that is not good. I try to put myself in a position when I think about all of the dreams I would have given up if I didn't have health care, if I didn't have the confidence to go out there and pursue my dreams. I would not be a professional athlete right now because I wouldn't have taken the risk, gone out there to play knowing that my mom, who is a single parent, didn't have health care. I'm glad I do now because I can go out there and take risks and when I do get hurt, I can get it checked out. Unfortunately, it's not the same for most people and this is what we're here to talk about. I really hope all of the parents who have uninsured kids would go ahead and call this number: 1-877-KIDSNOW to try and find out about the health care program. I think it's a great program. I'm glad to be associated with it and I'm glad to be standing up here in front of all of you. I really hope that this goes a long ways because I know that I'm appreciative of the fact that I can go out there and enjoy myself and do what I love to do, which is play sports and not worry about the consequences of getting hurt. I know it's very important to get checked out when you get hurt. And so if I get hurt, it's kind of easy for me to get it checked out because I have health care. And it's the same for every

other teenager or every other kid. We all know what kids and teens like to do. They all have a lot of energy, like I said before, and they like to go out there and play. And most of us, unfortunately, get hurt. So, it is very important to have health care. And as I said before, I am honored to be up here talking to you guys and I really hope that all of the parents with uninsured kids would really call this number, 1-877-KIDSNOW to try and find out about this health care program. And for you kids, you also have to take control of your health and tell your parents to make the call. This is an opportunity that you can't pass up and so I hope that you'll do that. Thanks a lot.

**Jaime Moreno:** I'm going to be really quick because we have to go practice. A lot of people know me as the forward of DC United. But I have a more important role outside the field. I'm the father of four children and I'm here as a father. Most fathers want to see their kids grow up healthy and happy. Two years ago, I had a back injury and thought my career was over. I was lucky to have health insurance that covered everything. I'm so lucky to be here right now and to play soccer. That's something that I love with all my heart, that's my passion. And without health insurance I would not be here. As a father, I want to say all of the parents that the most important thing is our kids and we have to take care of that, to have health insurance. Now with this opportunity to have free health insurance, it's a

great opportunity for everybody to do it. As a father, I just want to say thank you for being part of this group and I hope everybody hears this message and calls the number. Thank you.

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Thank you Jaime, thank you Freddy. We know that you have to duck out and get to practice. We appreciate you being here and all the joy you give us all year round, especially when you kick those winning goals. Thank you, very much.

Each year we launch our back-to-school campaign here in Washington, D.C. because it is our nation's capital, but more importantly because Washington has been a model for providing health coverage to its most vulnerable citizens. But still, 22% of these uninsured children went without any medical care for the entire year. And we want to thank Mayor Anthony Williams who has provided such strong leadership to provide these programs, the local service programs, and establish model programs for the nation. His leadership has really helped us to understand what could be done. Now as I mentioned earlier, we have an incredible all-star group up here today. We have the platinum-selling gospel duo, Mary Mary, Erica and Tina Campbell. As the surgeon general already told you, there is salsa legend Willie Colón who is going to debut an original video later on today for us to see. And last but not least, we have the hip-hop artist, an incredible artist, Benny Cassette who is going to lead us at the end of this conference. So we have an incredible morning. We also

have Sarah Shuptrine who is not going to sing and isn't going to do any bicycle kicks with the soccer ball, but she is an incredible leader and is going to tell us about the research findings that we're releasing today that highlight how our collaborative efforts will really ensure that kids nationwide get insurance. And finally, we are blessed to have three families from our nation who have agreed to share their story about the difference health care coverage has made in their lives. Right here, Ernesto and Jeanette [Inaudible] who are here from Miami, Florida. [Inaudible] and her two daughters, Eleanor and Leah from Seattle, Washington.

Now, we have all come together today to celebrate the achievements that we've had in getting kids coverage and to also give potentially life-changing information to families with uninsured children. For the last year, I saw all of this in action. Because whenever I can I supervise residents at a community health clinic in New Brunswick, New Jersey. This clinic provides health care for thousands of New Jersey's most vulnerable families. And I go there whenever I can to get connected to the front line, to become enmeshed and enamored, frankly to become exhausted and to become renewed in what we are actually trying to do. And it's there that I see the reasons that we are here today. Because there I see parents who work hard to take care of their families and yet are forced to delay care because their children are uninsured. I see physicians who are wanting to do the very

best they can for their patients, but hit obstacles, every day, because of their patient's insurance status. I see dedicated outreach workers with pens and papers and patients who really do make a difference for real children and real families. And these are the children and families that are behind the statistics that we all read about. The census bureau tells us that 8.4 million children in America do not have health insurance. One out of every nine kids in this country is uninsured. Now today we are releasing a new report called *Going Without: America's Uninsured Children*. It's a collaborative research report that combines the work of analysts at the state health access data assistance center and the urban institute. It's a report that frankly tells us the consequences of being uninsured are crystal clear. They are pervasive among children in every state and they are just unacceptable. A third of America's uninsured children do not get any health care for an entire year. And this state of affairs is worse for minority children in this country. The data that we are releasing today confirms that uninsured African American children are 20 times more likely to go without medical care that they need compared to their insured counterparts. And more than 40% of uninsured Hispanic children did not receive any medical care in an entire year. That means that 20% of Hispanic children, or 1 in 5, did not have health insurance. This is 14 percentage points higher than the rate in white children. And it just doesn't have to

be this way. We have in our report that 7 in 10 uninsured children are eligible, but not yet enrolled, in free or low-cost health insurance programs. The families of these children are constantly facing difficult decisions, prescription drugs, urgent care, even routine medical care for these families is downright unaffordable. Now, millions of children could get low-cost or free health care coverage simply by calling the toll free number, 1-877-KIDSNOW. And then their parents and their guardians could breathe a huge, collective sigh of relief. Covering Kids and Families Coalitions around the country are armed with paper and pens and information and the resources of nearly 200 national organizations and dozens of businesses could get this word out. We stress during this campaign, this back-to-school campaign, that back to school is the season, the ideal time to make sure that kids have the health coverage that they need because it's easier to do well in school, as the surgeon general said, when you feel well, when you're healthy. So, we believe that no child should go without a doctor's visit or skip the needed care that they should have. Coverage options are available and we have to get kids enrolled. So, during August and September, we're going to have thousands of enrollment activities taking place across the country, in churches, mosques, synagogues, schools, soccer fields. Every place that people work and play so that they can get enrolled. And these enrollment activities really embody the

mission of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to improve the health and health care of everyone in this country. They also help us achieve our objective, which we want to be the nation's objective, to ensure coverage for everyone in this country by 2010. Now, the lynchpin of getting to this objective is to improve assets to help coverage programs, the ones that we are talking about today. We have to reach out and encourage parents of uninsured children to get enrolled in programs like Medicaid and SCHIP. Above all, I think it's critically important that we realize that inequality in health care is just plain unacceptable in our great country.

Now, you're going to really be in for a treat. But first I want to just thank the National Major League Soccer. You can tell I'm not really as much of a sports fan as some of these kids over here. They have really been an incredible participant with us this year. They have helped us launch this event today and they are this year dedicating one of their games in cities across the country to children's health care coverage day. And what that means is that they will be promoting the number, the toll free number, 1-877-KIDSNOW on their [Inaudible]. They'll be putting it in the programs and we are incredibly excited to have major league soccer participation. They are joining with us with literally dozens of corporate sponsors and nearly 200 organizations to get the word out to various marketing venues. In fact, when we actually look at the organizations that are involved, I see a

number of them represented here today. We have the American Hospital Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Alliance of Hispanic Health, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the National Association of Community Health Centers. And I want to thank all of them for the dedication and their health in having us get the word out about this low-cost or free health coverage. I also see three of our long-time corporate partners:

Aramark, the National Association of Chain Drugstores and of course Giant Foods. Now, Giant Foods is placing public service ads on the back of their milk cartons and their work along with a new partner of ours, Kroeger, are putting a similar public service message on one of their most popular cereals. This will ensure that we are able to reach people with uninsured children and people who know of uninsured children while they are having their breakfast in the morning. So, we want to thank all of them because their sustained support will enable all of us to ensure that every child gets the coverage that they are eligible for.

It is now my pleasure to introduce the mayor of this great city. Mayor Anthony Williams has been gracious in having us be able to be in this city every year for our launch. And we want to express our gratitude for his leadership in providing quality health care for all of the districts and through creating the incredible program, DC Health Care Alliance. The Honorable Mayor Anthony Williams.

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**Anthony Williams:** Hi, everybody. I'm not going to take a lot of your time. I just wanted to be here to once again support the 2005 Covering Kids & Families national launch. I am very proud that it is here in Washington, D.C. And I am very proud that Dr. Risa Mourey, President and CEO of a great foundation. They are a lot of great foundations that are doing a lot of great work. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation does an incredible job in this city and in cities across the country. So, let's give her a big hand.

Our Surgeon General, Dr. Carmona, I want to thank him for stopping by and adding his prestige and the support of his office to this important affair. Freddy Adu and Jaime Moreno for major league soccer, our own DC United, major league soccer champions. Let's give them a hand of thanks.

The testimony that we're going to hear from our families and performers, thank you all as well. It's really wonderful to have all of you here in the beautiful Kennedy Center. We all know of the Kennedy Center on the Potomac. But this is the other Kennedy Center. This is named after obviously the Kennedy family. It's very important because this is part of a number of recreation centers that have been built in our city over the last six years and we're very proud of this facility. And I'm very proud as mayor that we're having this year to make this major launch and as I say that, I want to recognize Barbara Jones who is the director of this beautiful Kennedy Recreation Center. So, let's give

Barbara a big hand. Where is Barbara, is she around here somewhere? I guess she's busy directing. I'm proud to say that we've enrolled nearly 72,000 children and 31,000 adults in the program. That's a [Inaudible] between D.C. healthy families or district Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance program working to provide free health care coverage to uninsured children under age 19 and to their parents and guardians. And I'm also very proud of the D.C. Health Care Alliance. You know, the Alliance is a public-private partnership between the city and private health care providers in the district and its focus in the neighborhoods. It's focus on preventative and primary care. And what does it do? It provides eligible uninsured residents with easy access to a wide array of professional health care providers. What they are doing is increasing access, ensuring quality and improving health outcomes for all eligible, uninsured residents in the District of Columbia. As a matter of fact, the Kaiser Family Foundation did a study, they had good things to say about the Health Care Alliance. And the Rand Corporation, they don't work for me, completely independent, came in and did a study, they had good things to say. In fact, the Health Care Alliance in the District of Columbia, if we were a state and as you know we won recognition [Inaudible] in our city, that's another issue. But, if we were treated as a state and [Inaudible] uninsured of any state in the United States. This is right here in Washington,

D.C. The fact is that as you have heard and as you will hear, there is still a lot to do. There are still kids not insured. They are still kids not getting the care that they need. We all know that [Inaudible]. It's also a health care issue for all of us and it also has had an impact on all of us because these children aren't leading healthy lives. If they aren't getting a good, healthy start, they're not going to be leading productive lives. [Inaudible] even from a role of self interest, it's important because, hello, these children are going to be supporting our retirement. So, if you're planning on a retirement, you know to be self-interested about it, you have to be focused on the future. You have to be focused on these kids. I don't think it's fair to these kids to leave these kids with a mountain of debt, a mountain of problems, poor outcome, poor health care. That's not the way we ought to run a society. You know it's been said, the character and survival of a society is determined ultimately by how it treats its children. And that is so true. And that's why as mayor I'm proud to be here and again welcome you, to launch the program here at the Kennedy Recreation Center here in Washington. I'm encouraging all of our parents to call toll free 1-877-KIDSNOW and put enrolling kids in health care at the top of our back-to-school list. Thank you so very much for what you're doing. Thank you for being here.

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Thank you, Mister

Mayor for putting it in terms that us older people can

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understand as well and relate to. I now would love to turn to our platinum-selling gospel duo, Mary Mary. You know, they are here today to support the back-to-school campaign and in the year 2000, these two sisters, Erica and Tina Campbell, earned the respect and success of the country with Mary Mary's platinum debut CD *Thankful*. Since then, they have skyrocketed. But, they have also taken on some additional challenges. Now, both Erica and Tina have children of their own. And they understand how difficult it is to balance your job and your family life. And so it is just a pleasure to have them here to make a few remarks and maybe even treat us with one of their new songs.

**Tina Campbell:** It is a pleasure to be here and to be a part of such a wonderful event. This information will not only help others, but it is personally going to benefit us. They are tons of people that we know that don't have insurance, growing up in urban neighborhoods. So, we have been [Inaudible] privileged recording artists. There are still a lot of people that we know who don't have insurance who say that I just can't afford it. So, this is going to help us personally. We're definitely here not just to sing, but to support covering kids, wholeheartedly, as we hope you all will. It's also very important to us because we both have children. Erica has a daughter that is not yet one and mine is almost two. With us being first-time parents, we've been to the doctor loads of times for things that were kind of

unnecessary, but we're grateful that we've been afforded the opportunity to have insurance because there were concerns that we had, we didn't know if they actually needed medical attention or not. But we had the opportunity to go check and make sure the situation wasn't severe. Growing up, because we came from a low-income, large family, there were gaps of time when we didn't have insurance and we were at a disadvantage because we didn't have it. But we are glad that we can take this information back to our local churches and our local community. I jotted the number down in my [Inaudible] and I'm going right to my church and we're making the announcement right across the pulpit so that people can know that it's here for you, you know here's the information, go after it. Your children can be covered. I applaud your efforts, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Covering Kids & Families Back-to-School Campaign. We think it's awesome what you're doing, God bless your efforts and I hope that more children are covered as a result of what you do. Yes, we do have an album in the stores released July 19<sup>th</sup>. There is a song on there that speaks to a desire that everybody has, to go to a better place. A place where there is peace, where there is love, where there is joy. I have a question: does anybody here want to go to heaven? Well, all right. That sounds good.

[SINGING]

God bless you, thank you for allowing us to be a part of this wonderful event.

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Mary Mary. Boy, I tell you, with voices like that, I might even be able to get to heaven. Our next speaker has a hard job because she has to follow that. She is not a singer, but she brings an incredible wealth of experience, knowledge, leadership to covering kids and families. Sarah Shuptrine has been the director of covering kids and families and is the founder and CEO of the Southern Institute on Children and Families. She has been on the front lines of children's health care, implementing promising programs and practices and really paving the way for this past decade's success in getting more kids the health coverage that they so desperately need and deserve. I know I speak for everyone at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in saying how incredibly fortunate and blessed we are to have her as part of our team. So please, welcome Sarah to the podium.

**Sarah Shuptrine:** Thank you, Risa for your kind introduction and for your tremendous leadership. Understanding the vision and the commitment of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation makes it possible for Covering Kids and Families Coalitions across the country to link children who need health coverage to the health coverage that they desperately need. For the last seven years, Covering Kids & Families Coalitions in every state and right here in the

District of Columbia have worked to inform families about health coverage opportunities for their children, to simplify the eligibility process so that families are treated with respect and dignity, where they come and apply, the processes are not difficult for them to go through, and to help enroll children and keep them enrolled as long as they remain eligible. From Sunfest in Chicago to soccer games in Los Angeles, you'll find Covering Kids & Families working in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia. According to new analyses that we are releasing today, the good news is that our work is paying off. Due in part to the tireless efforts of our coalitions and many equally dedicated partner organizations, the number of uninsured children has dropped by almost 2,000,000 since 1998. Remarkably, this decline took place during the same period as the number of uninsured parents increased by more than 1,000,000. Why did we see a decrease in uninsured children? Largely because of the Medicaid and SCHIP programs that are providing much needed coverage for millions of children. Our data also revealed that minority families, especially African American families, made the greatest gain. Since 1998, the uninsured rates for African American and Hispanic children fell significantly, more than the rate for white children. Medicaid and SCHIP are providing the safety net they were designed to provide and all of our hard work is producing results. We have a lot to celebrate. But there is still so much more to do that we must

do. As Risa mentioned, our report unearthed some disturbing facts. Uninsured minorities are more likely to miss out on needed health care. And significant numbers of uninsured children are going without any medical care. The report reveals another unfortunate fact: even uninsured children who are getting some care, are not always seeing a doctor when they need one. Uninsured children are 10 times more likely than insured children to miss out on needed health care. We are here today to tell all parents that it doesn't have to be that way. Health care coverage programs for children are available in every state and right here in the District of Columbia. If families struggle to make ends meet, your uninsured children may be eligible for low-cost or free health care coverage. These programs are designed for families with modest incomes including working families. In most states, families of four earning up to 38,000 or more can be eligible for health care coverage for their children through the Medicaid and SCHIP programs. These health care programs provide regular check-ups, dental and vision care, prescription drugs and necessary hospitalization and emergency rooms when that is needed. To parents with uninsured children, I urge you to call the toll free number: 1-877-KIDSNOW to see if your children are eligible for these wonderful programs. This simple phone call could be the most important step you can take to get your children ready for a successful school year.

I now have the pleasure of introducing a woman who knows first hand the challenges that parents face when they do not have health care coverage for their children. And the peace of mind that comes when they do have that health care coverage. To share the story of how her family enrolled, I am humbled to introduce our next speaker, Sonya Bumpers [misspelled?] from Birmingham, Alabama. And please join me in welcoming Sonya and her daughter, Chanel [misspelled?].

**Sonya Bumpers:** Good morning. We're Sonya and Chanel Bumpers. Chanel is 11 and we're from Birmingham, Alabama. I work for a local community organization and that is a wonderful job. I love what I do. It provides me the opportunity to go out into the community and find out about different programs and services that help families. But my job, even though I make \$27,000 a year, did not have health benefit coverage that would provide the coverage that I needed for Chanel and myself, which can be a very scary situation for parents that do not have coverage or do not have adequate coverage. So in my opportunity for being out in the community, I found out about a program in Birmingham called All Kids, but nationally it is the Medicaid or SCHIP program. In March of this year, I went online to enroll to see if our family qualified, and we did. And that was such a relief to find out that we were actually eligible for All Kids Program in Alabama. This Medicaid and SCHIP program has been a lifeline for me in our household because it helped me

relieve the burdens of which bills to pay. So, you can imagine what it was like the day I actually got this card in the mail. It was like Christmas, birthday and the birth of my child all wrapped up into one. Because I knew that I had coverage for her and that she could go to the doctor to get that vision and eye and dental coverage that she really needed. Just the small things, but it's very important to me. And I would encourage every family, grandparent, responsible parents of children to dial the 1-877-KIDSNOW to find out if your children are eligible because it was definitely a lifeline for us. And I really appreciate the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the nation for having such an excellent program for my child and for my peace of mind in knowing that we are covered. Again, the number is 1-877-KIDSNOW and we just wish that you would do the same thing that I did. Thank you.

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Thank you very much for coming this long way to share your story. It takes courage and millions of people will benefit from having heard from you.

Well, I was looking for Willie Colón and let me just take a moment to turn to our other families who have come here from such a long distance, have come thousands of miles. From Miami, the Montoya [misspelled?] family, from Seattle Washington, the Kear [misspelled?] family, and just ask them why they came this long distance to be with us here today?

**Ernesto Montoya:** Hello, my name is Ernesto Montoya [misspelled?] and I am here from Miami, Florida. And of course over there is my beautiful family. Take a second and look over here at all of the kids that are over here. The ones that are on the stage and over here. Because they are our future. One of the things with me is that I am a Navy Reservist. Having peace of mind, knowing that any minute I could be called up to go to war and that my family would be covered was the reason why I went ahead and did this. They are our future and we must think of them because without them we would not be able to do what we're doing now. It's very easy, just making a phone call. The number is 1-877-KIDSNOW, very simple. Make that phone call, get your kids insured and have peace of mind just like I have right now. Thank you.

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Again, thank you for coming all the way from Miami. And now it's just a thrill for me to be able to introduce Willie Colón, one of the legends in Latin salsa music. He is here with us today to convey the importance of getting all kids coverage. You know, Mr. Colón recorded his first album, back then we did call it an album, at the age of 17. He has had 15 that went gold, five that went platinum and he has been honored with the Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award. In addition to his musical success, something that you all may not know, is that he served as a member of the Latino Commission on AIDS and has been on the board of the United Immigrants Foundation and the

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. He is truly a superstar whose global residence is only matched by his social conscience. Please, Mr. Colón.

**Willie Colon:** Thank you, thank you so much. Wow, it's not easy speaking, being here and being one of the last speakers, after all of these folks. The same thing happened the other day, I was the last speaker and everybody was walking out and there was just one guy left there. And after I finished I said, "Thank you, you're a gentleman." He said, no, I'm the soundman, I'm waiting for the microphone. Yeah, but it's not easy to come after all of these people. You had the surgeon general who is like Sean Connery in the White House there. And he's from the Bronx. I'd like to thank Freddy Adu on behalf of the older people. And we get really tired, but I didn't start breaking a sweat until Mary Mary started to sing and that was really nice. My name is Willie Colon and I'm proud to be here today, not only as a musician, but also as a parent. I grew up in a very poor neighborhood and we didn't go to the doctor, we went to the emergency room when we were really, really sick. If you looked like you were going to make it, you would wait. So, I think this is such an important thing to let parents know what is available to them already. The information is very valuable and it is going to save a lot of lives and a lot of these kids are going to make it because of this campaign. To my friends in the Spanish

media and all of the Latino parents out there, I say [Spanish Spoken].

We wrote a song to help remind parents about health care coverage and how important it is. The song is mostly in Spanish, so many of you won't be able to understand it. But, it's message is clear: low cost or free health care coverage is available to most uninsured children. All it takes is a free phone call to 1-877-KIDSNOW. Enjoy and muchos gracias and to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Covering Kids and Families for inviting me here today. Thank you.

[SINGING]

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Wow. I can't leave the podium without mentioning that Willie was on tour in South America and came back here today, just today, to be here with us. So, we want to give you a tremendous thank you for being here and for that incredible video and your commitment to the cause.

Now, before I close, I want to just thank everyone who has been working so hard to make this a success. We could not have done it without, literally, the hundreds of people around the country that Sarah spoke of in getting the reduction in the numbers of children who are uninsured that we celebrate today. I would like to now open it up for questions. While you're formulating your questions, let me just turn to Mrs. Kear and ask us if she would like to tell us why she came all this way from Seattle.

**Mrs. Kear:** Thank you. Well, we came all this way because we just wanted to say thank you and to spread the good news. Parents, you can call this phone number: 1-877-KIDSNOW. Please call it. Don't worry about qualifying, just call and have your load lightened as ours has been lightened. Maybe you're like me. Maybe the last couple years of your life have been really hard. Maybe you lost a job and the threat of lost health care coverage has been a really scary time. Especially if you have a child like my youngest, [Inaudible], who was born with a lot of medical issues. She has asthma, she has clubbed feet. She has [Inaudible], she has to go to the doctor a lot. She has a lot of trouble breathing and a lot of medications. But, these people have helped. And they can help a lot of other parents, too. That's why we came. Call 1-877-KIDSNOW. Thank you.

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Any other questions? Ahh, I see a future journalist out there. Looks about two years old. Yes, ma'am, please. Let's get the microphone.

**Female Speaker:** If people call this number, will they reach a counselor, is it a recording? Secondly, in the wake of cuts to State Medicaid programs, can they afford to cover all of the eligible children?

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** When you call the number 1-877-KIDSNOW, you get connected to someone in your state who knows the eligibility requirements for the people in that state. And we are very mindful of the fact that

states are having troubles, that they have budget situations. The purpose of this program is to ensure that kids who are eligible and states who still have enrollment for these children have the opportunity to get them covered and get them the health care that they need. So, by calling the number, you get connected directly to the state, they know the eligibility and they can give parents the information they need. Any other questions? Well, in that case I want to close by thanking the D.C. Department of Services, this wonderful recreation center, our coalition, local coalition for Covering Families here in D.C. that have made this event so much fun, have helped us host it. And we want to encourage everyone to go outside and get engaged in the enrollment there and to help us get motivated and energized to do that, I am going to ask hip-hop artist, Benny Cassette to come to the podium and perform one of his original rap songs that has been modified for today and I know you will enjoy it as much as all of the college radio stations did across the country when he first performed it for Cover the Uninsured week. Benny? Oh, I missed a question, ma'am: the question is will it cover teens without parental consent and I'm going to turn that to Sarah. Do you want to take that question? Will teens without parental consent be covered?

**Sarah Shuptrine:** Teens or children, they are eligible for these programs. How's that for a succinct answer?

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** Okay, Benny. Okay, one more question.

**Male Speaker:** My question is will this be separate and apart from health care, if you have health care can you use this as additional health care? Say for instance your children go off to college, can you use this for them while they're away at college?

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., MBA:** This coverage is for kids who do not have other coverage, parents who have modest income, for most states up to about \$30,000. And it's kids up to the age of 18. So, those precocious children who are going to college at an age less than 18 could get this coverage, but us regular ones who took longer would probably not be eligible for this coverage.

With that, Benny, get us going!

**Benny Cassette:** Everybody all right? Still awake, everybody good? All right. We can clap, make noise. Thank you folks for having me up here. This is a piece that was written specifically for Covering the Uninsured Week:

*She works a full day, gets home late.*

*No time with the kids 'cause they're never awake.*

*She can't afford to not work 'cause bills stack up.*

*Kids gotta have clothes and a nice sack lunch.*

*But in the back of her mind she's always stressed and a little nervous,*

*'Cause if someone gets sick there's no health insurance.*

*She couldn't get medical if she saved every cent.  
The extra couple hundred a month, well that's the rent.  
And she's not the only one who goes uninsured,  
There's 44,000,000 just like her.  
And kids with no insurance, does that make you wonder?  
Most people don't even know there is insurance for the  
younger.  
And that affects everyone, white collar, blue collar.  
It's crazy that my well being depends on making a dollar.  
And as for me, I can't get sick, I gotta make a buck.  
End up in a hospital bed, I'll go bankrupt.  
I know families that have, like my mom and my dad  
It tears people apart, you gotta see it first hand.  
You probably have some close friends that even go without  
And they'll let you know, two days in the hospital, mess up  
your whole savings account.  
We all deserve to live healthy, we gotta treat ourselves  
fair.  
Adults may not, but all the children can have health care.*

Now, if I can go politely but energetically. I ask  
everyone to please stand up, please stand up. Shake off the  
cobwebs, stretch. We're gonna go outside, we're gonna get out  
the [Inaudible] jam. We're gonna do a couple of songs  
outside, enjoy each other's company, have some fun listening  
to music. So come on, follow me outside, let's go.

[END RECORDING]