



CHILD DEFENDER - NEW YORK

A Call to Action from the Children's Defense Fund - New York
JUNE 23, 2006
LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

CDF-NY Supports Legislative Commission on Health Coverage Reform in New York

CDF-NY applauds Assemblyman Richard Gottfried for his vision in introducing legislation that calls for the creation of a Health Care Commission to explore universal health care coverage in New York. Among the Commission's mandate will be examining ways to find and enroll the almost half a million uninsured children, an important first step for New York.

The legislation calls for a 14-member Commission represented by consumers and providers of health care, insurers, organized labor, business, local government, health policy analysts and academic experts. The Commission will be comprised of two committees, one will examine options to achieve universally publicly financed health coverage and the other will examine the possible expansion of traditional health coverage.

Objectives for each committee include setting up a timetable of implementation, conducting public hearings and submitting independent analysis. After a thorough examination and evaluation of various proposals, recommendations will be made to determine the next course of action for health care legislation in New York.

As of June 20th, the bill had been passed unanimously by the New York State Assembly. We urge the State Senate to follow the Assembly and to support such critical legislation.

Federal New Citizenship Documentation Requirement Does Not Impact Immigrants' Ability to Receive Health Insurance in New York State

New federal legislation, passed in February, requiring citizenship documentation for all Medicaid beneficiaries does not change eligibility for immigrants and does not impact immigrants' ability to apply for Medicaid, Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus in New York State. **It is important to note that this is a federal documentation requirement not a change in eligibility, contrary to false press reports.**

The new federal requirement will require citizenship documentation for new beneficiaries at application and current beneficiaries at renewal. New York is one of a small number of states that already has a citizenship documentation requirement on the books. Since New York already documents citizenship, the new legislation will affect how we now document identity.

On June 9th, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued guidance detailing how they want the states to implement the new requirement, which is effective July 1, 2006. New York is currently in the process of clarifying the requirement with CMS and has not issued their changes to our documentation requirements. Once they finalize their changes, the New York State Department of Health will issue an administrative directive.

In the meantime, it is important to spread the word that immigrants eligible for health insurance will not lose access to coverage. As soon as CDF-NY obtains New York's new documentation policy we will be sure to publicize it.

The Global Women's Action Network For Children Conference - *Excerpted from* Closing Remarks by Marian Wright Edelman

I want to thank Your Majesty Queen Rania again for your gracious patronage of this groundbreaking gathering of women leaders for women, for children and for youth from every sector from around the world determined to stop the unjust and unnecessary death of a mother every minute, of 450 newborns every hour, and of 10.5 million children under 5 every year – 11 million all together – three-fourths of them preventable. And we can and will stop the social and economic death of 100 million children denied an education in our resource rich but spiritually poor interdependent globe.

I thank the conference co-conveners, speakers and moderators, the National Council for Family Affairs and my wonderful colleagues at the Children's Defense Fund for all your good and hard work. And I'm so grateful to each of you extraordinary women leaders – multi-generational, multi-faith,

multi-racial, multi-sector – who came from near and far to bundle our voices, talents, resources and wills together in passionate, persistent and irresistible advocacy that will take not take no, maybe or later for an answer to the urgent cries of mothers and motherless children dying this second, minute and hour this day and every day.

We recognized in this conference that the lives of women and children are inextricably intertwined as are the two goals the Global Women's Action Network for Children selected for focused and long-term action: maternal and child mortality and health and girls' education. Both are embodied in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the United Nations to be achieved by 2015. At the current rate of progress, the majority of nations will not meet them but together we are going to change that outcome.

I hope this Jordan conference will spark a bold, aggressive, focused and combined advocacy voice that will carry the morally obscene and unnecessary suffering and illiteracy of powerless mothers and children into the halls of power and keep them there until they become visible and urgent global imperatives that must be acted upon. That we can and must do this is clear. We know from this conference the hope we can bring, the dreams we can salvage, the knowledge we can share, the successful policies and practices we can scale up, the power we can multiply and the wills we can build by uniting our demands for justice for the voiceless through collaborative action steps and a strategic, long term action plan that will include:

- Developing and mounting a powerful, sustained, strategic multimedia public awareness campaign to make and keep visible the preventable mortality, morbidity and illiteracy of mothers and children around the globe, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, and the huge social and economic gains for families, communities, nations and the world of healthy and educated women and girls.
- Establishing a Global Women's Action Network for Children interactive website which will provide up-to-date information on best practices, current and relevant research in a user friendly form, and a calendar of important global and national events and conferences and Network activities so that our message and messengers can be dispatched to engage others.
- Raising a strong, focused, more united advocacy voice across sectors, faith, age and race of powerful women leaders is the groundbreaking value added of this Network. We will seek not only to strengthen our own individual networks but to help develop the leadership and advocacy capacity of others to enable, amplify, scale up and sustain the work of frontline leaders to hold key decision makers accountable for results.
- Targeting two or three nations to accelerate the rate of progress on our two goals through a range of advocacy, leadership and community capacity building strategies and infrastructure development.

- Monitoring the commitments from developed nations – especially the United States – and holding them accountable for appropriating promised resources, and encouraging monitoring of actions in all nations for measurable results on mothers and children's health and quality education for girls.
- Increasing the understanding, commitment, passion and sisterhood among prominent women committed to stand for powerless women and children through Maternal and Child Health and Education Watches, annual Interfaith Days of Prayer and other opportunities to celebrate important milestones and mothers and children together globally.
- Creating an Advocacy Fund to more effectively harness and utilize our and other network's human capital, in-kind resources, and ability to engage decision makers and investors in our goals. The fund would also be used as a means to effectively focus resources on and showcase best practices.

Conference co-conveners will meet within 30-45 days to fully flesh out the full action plan as well as a coordinating infrastructure. It will be housed at the Children's Defense Fund with dedicated staff.

In this time of unbearable dissonance between promise and performance; between good politics and good policy; between professed and practiced human and family values; between racial and religious creed and racial and religious deed; between calls for community and rampant individualism and greed; and between our capacity to prevent and alleviate human deprivation and disease and our political and spiritual will to do so, I believe our children – and their mothers – and women can become the healing agents of our national and world transformation.

One faith leader wrote that when God wants an important thing done in this world or a wrong righted, God goes about it in a very singular way. God doesn't release thunderbolts or stir up earthquakes. God simply has a tiny baby born, perhaps of a very humble home, perhaps of a very humble mother. God puts an idea in the baby's mind and then God waits. The great events of this world are not battles and elections and earthquakes and thunderbolts. The great events are babies, for each child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged with humanity, but is still expecting goodwill to become the incarnate in each human life.

And so God produced a Marie Curie, Shirin Ebadi, Mother Teresa, Gandhi and Mandela, an Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Jr., a Queen Rania and a Mary Robinson and each of us to guide the earth towards peace rather than conflict; towards health and abundance rather than poverty and death. Every prophet, president, king, queen, leader and human being of every place, color, gender and faith entered life as a baby. The child is the present and the future and our Creator's universal messenger of hope and immortality. What will it take for the world to get it? It will take women to get the world to get it at a time when millions of child lives are ravaged by the wars, neglect, abuse, racial, ethnic, religious, and class divisions of adults.