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## Memorandum in Support of *S. 8438 / A. 9294*: Continuous Medicaid Eligibility from Infancy to Three Years Old

April 27, 2022

The Children's Defense Fund – New York (CDF-NY) strongly supports *S. 8438* (Rivera) / *A. 9294* (Gottfried), which would extend continuous Medicaid coverage of infants from up to one year to up to three years for families whose income does not exceed 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). In doing so, this legislation would ensure uninterrupted healthcare access for the youngest and most marginalized New Yorkers during their first 1,000 days of life – an especially critical period in a child's physical, cognitive and emotional development.

Health insurance is the most important predictor of whether or not children will receive needed preventive health care services as well as treatment for illnesses and injuries. Continuous and affordable healthcare coverage for infants and children – and, particularly, for Medicaid-eligible recipients – is thereby extremely important. The first three years of a child's life is a particularly vital period for healthy lifelong development, and is a window during which timely access to routine screenings, vaccinations and well-child visits is critical for healthy physical and emotional growth and development as well as school readiness. Health coverage for infants and toddlers has lifelong societal benefits, including higher educational attainment leading to employment and economic gains. Consistent Medicaid coverage for infants and toddlers is arguably more critical now than ever before, as we know that far too many children have missed important preventive services, such as lead screenings, over the course of the pandemic.

New York families whose babies are receiving coverage under Medicaid should not have to worry about reapplying for coverage during the first three years of life, risking delaying or skipping essential medical services in the process. An extension of Medicaid coverage for three years after birth without the administrative burdens and costs to families of reapplying for coverage will thereby reduce gaps in coverage due to such factors as confusion over renewal requirements or family income fluctuations.

The Children's Defense Fund – New York therefore strongly supports *S. 8438* (Rivera) / *A. 9294* (Gottfried). For more information, please contact Ben Anderson, Director of Economic Mobility and Health Policy at [banderson@childrensdefense.org](mailto:banderson@childrensdefense.org).

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The Children's Defense Fund-New York (CDF-NY) has a unique approach to improving conditions for children, combining research, public education, policy development, direct services, and advocacy. A recognized authority in the endeavor to protect New York children and strengthen their families, CDF-NY serves as a resource and partner for children, families and organizations throughout New York State.