



Stephanie Gadlin, Director of Communications & Media

National Center on Poverty Law

205 W. Monroe, 2d Floor Chicago, IL 60606

Phone: (312) 263-3830 ext. 243 Fax: (312) 263-3846

Email: sgadlin@povertylaw.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, May 30, 2001

CONTACT: STEPHANIE GADLIN
312-368-5229

**FAMILY CARE ADVOCATES TO CONTINUE URGING LAWMAKERS
TO FUND HEALTH COVERAGE FOR 200,000 WORKING ADULTS**
New York state and federal government agrees to launch a similar program

(CHICAGO, IL) – Today, A coalition of health care and legal services advocates vowed to continue to press Illinois lawmakers on expanding KidCare health insurance to uninsured working adults. Despite extensive lobbying efforts which culminated with Governor George Ryan’s defense of Family Care, the General Assembly neglected to include the program in its \$50 billion budget.

“Unfortunately, more than 200,000 people are going to go another year without health insurance,” said John Bouman, deputy director of the National Center on Poverty Law. “ In the fall, Illinois will also lose about \$100 million in federal money to 17 other states, including New York, Indiana and Michigan. We expect Illinois to move forward in making this a reality for those who need it.

“We’re asking the governor to begin the process to secure the federal waivers and for everyone in state government to find the money to do this in Illinois,” he said. “Family Care remains both fiscally and morally responsible.”

More than 200 business, labor, health care, religious and grassroots organizations, including Advocate Health Care, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois and the AFL-CIO, rallied in the capitol and in Down State Illinois in support of Family Care. A recent poll, conducted by Voices for Illinois Children, indicated that 79% of Illinois voters supported extending KidCare benefits to adults. The program, would cover low-income adults who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but don’t make enough to afford private insurance. The extended coverage would cost Illinois about \$7 million in its first year, with the federal government picking up 65 percent of remaining costs.

“This fight is far from over. We have energized the electorate and educated thousands of people about this important issue. However, tomorrow I still have to look my uninsured patients in the eye and tell them their legislative leaders said wait until next year,” said Katie Poronsky, a registered nurse and a leader with United Power for Action and Justice. “The next step is to keep the pressure on. We want the governor and the general body to make health care coverage a priority for the working poor. For them, there is no other alternative.”

United Power for Action and Justice was founded in 1995 with the support of Cardinal Bernardin and other religious and labor leaders. It is a metropolitan wide citizen’s organization of 330 member congregations, unions, and community organizations.

Ironically, news of the state’s failure to approve the bill comes at the same time the Pataki administration and the Bush administration have reached an agreement that permits New York to begin providing medical coverage to 600,000 uninsured New Yorkers through its extended KidCare program. The New York Times reports that the working poor will receive “virtually free insurance to families earning up to 150 percent of the federal poverty line.

-END-

