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**Kentucky's Children and Families Are Big Winners
in Last Night's Vote for Historic Health Reform**

**Statement from Terry Brooks,
Executive Director, Kentucky Youth Advocates**

The House of Representatives took an historic step in support of America's children and families by passing health reform legislation, yesterday evening. By creating reliable, affordable coverage options that don't disappear when a parent becomes sick or loses a job, the legislation protects and strengthens the well-being and financial stability of our nation's children and their families. The legislation also bolsters Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, covers the uninsured, provides tax credits, and addresses insurer discrimination against preexisting conditions for children. Families will no longer have to bet against skyrocketing or unreliable costs associated with health insurance. Overall, families are going to have guarantees that ensure greater affordability, accessibility and accountability.

Components in the bill will impact Kentucky families by reducing the rate of uninsured children and families and improving the health of Kentuckians. A major step forward for Kentucky families is the expansion of Medicaid coverage to low-income families which will allow children and parents to be covered together, as we know that children whose parents have health insurance are more likely to receive needed health services themselves. One key provision to take effect immediately allows parents to keep their college-age children (up to age 26) on their family health plans. Others notable provisions include:

- Requiring insurance companies to provide pediatrician-recommended care for children so they can grow and thrive.
- Provisions for caloric menu labeling on chain restaurant menus, menu boards, and drive-thrus. This applies to restaurants with 20 or more locations nationwide. This will allow families to make informed decisions about what they eat.
- Funding to maintain and expand school based health centers.

There are still challenges and opportunities for improving children's health in Kentucky. For instance, more efforts are needed to encourage schools to become active agents of wellness for kids. Increasing access for children through increasing the Medicaid reimbursement rate is another opportunity. The legislation is neither a silver bullet nor a simple path but it is a significant step in making sure that every child in America has a shot at quality health care. Let there be no doubt, Kentucky kids and families are the real winners with this historic legislation.

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Kentucky Youth Advocates is a non-partisan, non-profit, children's advocacy organization. KYA represents a voice for Kentucky's most precious asset – its youth. We believe that Kentucky's youth deserve the opportunities and resources necessary to ensure their productive development and health.