



SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY	
EXHIBIT NO.	3
DATE:	1-21-05
BILL NO.	SB 156

January 21, 2005

Senator Brent Cromley, Chairman  
Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee  
State Capitol Building  
Helena MT 59601

Support SB 156 Children's Health Insurance Program Eligibility

Chairman Cromley and members of the Committee:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Claudia Clifford, advocacy consultant for AARP Montana. AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization with more than 143,000 members in Montana.

In our December 2004 Membership survey 86% of our members said the #1 Legislative Priority was "Access to affordable, quality health care". Our members are very supportive of the Children's Health Insurance Program. On behalf of the 6,000 grandparents raising grandchildren in Montana, we urge this legislature to cover as many uninsured kids as is possible with available funding.

This bill provides flexibility to the Department of Health and Human Services to set the income eligibility at any level up to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Through I-149 this legislature has the opportunity to increase state funding for CHIP and drawn down the 80% federal fund match to cover more kids. By estimates there are still many uninsured kids below 150% FPL, but should not enough of these kids enroll in CHIP, this bill provides the flexibility for the department to cover kids at a slightly higher income level. We are confident that the department will continue to manage the CHIP program wisely and be able to bring on more kids or scale back the program depending on funding. CHIP has been a very successful program and this bill will give the program needed flexibility to continue providing health coverage to as many kids as possible.