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2/12/08

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**SUNUNU, GREGG ANNOUNCE GROWING SUPPORT
FOR FEDERAL MICHELLE'S LAW LEGISLATION**

**National Health Council, National Education Association, America's Health Insurance
Plans among organizations backing federal proposal**

WASHINGTON, DC – United States Senators John Sununu and Judd Gregg (R-NH) today (2/12) announced that the National Health Council, the National Education Association, and America's Health Insurance Plans are among 14 new organizations supporting federal "Michelle's Law" legislation (S. 400). The bill, introduced in 2007 by Sununu, Gregg (R-NH), and Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) would provide for the extension of existing health insurance coverage to college students for up to one year in the event of illness.

The State of New Hampshire adopted a similar law at the state level, known as "Michelle's Law," after the late Michelle Morse, a 20-year-old college student at Plymouth State University (New Hampshire), was forced to remain a full-time student despite being treated for advanced colon cancer. She died in 2005 soon after graduating from Plymouth State.

Senator Sununu stated, "Every week, more and more national organizations throw their support behind this federal 'Michelle's Law.' This demonstrates the broad agreement across, health, education, and insurance groups that full-time college students covered by federally regulated health plans deserve coverage if they need to leave school to handle a serious illness. With this coverage, ailing students would be able to focus on recovering rather than being both a full-time student and full-time patient – a dramatic impact on those students and families whose costs and hardship may otherwise be enormous."

Senator Gregg stated, "Throughout the course of her illness, Michelle Morse bravely fought to make things better for future college students who experience serious illness or injury causing them to leave college. I am proud to join Senators Sununu and Clinton in sponsoring this bipartisan bill which is a tribute to Michelle's memory and recognition of her family's dedication and commitment to make sure families are able to focus on the care and recovery of their college age child, instead of worrying about how to pay the health care costs when insurance will no longer cover their care. I applaud these national health organizations for recognizing the importance of this much needed legislation through their support."

Organizations backing the legislation include:

- ***National Health Council*** (120 member health-care related organizations make up the Council)

“Enacting Michelle’s Law will signify advancement for our healthcare system, and (is) a blessing to those who need it the most. The NHC backs this legislation as a simple but necessary step on a path towards a healthier, stronger America.” - Myrl Weinberg, CAE, President

- ***American Heart/Stroke Association***

“No young person should be faced with the predicament of taking a full course load while fighting a debilitating disease, simply so they don’t lose their health insurance coverage.” - Sue Nelson, Vice President of Federal Advocacy

- ***National Education Association***

“We thank you for your leadership in introducing this important legislation, which would increase access to health insurance for college students required to take a medical leave of absence from their studies in the event of medical crisis.” - Diane Shust, Director of Government Relations and Randall Moody, Manager of Federal Advocacy

- ***America’s Health Insurance Plans***

“AHIP’s members appreciate your hard work on this issue. We share your concerns and have taken pro-active steps to demonstrate our strong commitment to addressing the coverage needs of students who are forced to leave school for medical reasons.”

- Karen Ignagni, President and CEO

- ***Cancer Action Network***

“We commend you for your leadership in addressing this gap in health insurance coverage for students, and for your commitment to advancing the interests of cancer patients and their families.” – Daniel Smith, President and Wendy K.D. Selig, Vice President of Legislative Affairs

- ***National Collegiate Athletic Association***

“I believe that being supportive of S. 400 is in line with the NCAA’s recent approach and will provide proper support for students and their families when faced with the need to take an extended medical leave of absence.” - Myles Bran, President

- ***Colorectal Cancer Coalition***

“Treatment for colorectal cancer and many other diseases are quite grueling on a person’s body. S. 400 would allow students to focus solely on treating their illness as opposed to being a full-time patient AND full time student.” - Carlea Bauman, Executive Director

- ***The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society***

“Having access to insurance is crucial for a patient to be able to access timely, appropriate, and affordable health care that is necessary to treat cancer and other serious illnesses.” - George Dahlman, Senior Vice President, Public Policy

- ***American College Health Association***

“Please accept ACHA’s support/endorsement for S. 400 as we agree this represents an important modification to provide insurance coverage for college students who must interrupt their studies due to a medically necessary leave of absence.”

- Doyle Randol, Executive Director

- ***American Diabetes Association***

“The Association is encouraged by this important step to help seriously ill students maintain healthcare coverage throughout a critical time of need without undue financial burden, and we applaud your bi-partisan leadership on this issue.”

- James P. Schlicht, Executive Vice President, Government Affairs and Advocacy

- ***National Patient Advocate Foundation***

“Your legislation is a reflection of compassion within our legislative process for which we thank you. We offer our strongest support and endorsement for your legislation and are committed to working with you and your staff to accomplish passage of this bill.”

- Nancy Davenport-Ennis, President and CEO

- ***National Association of Social Workers***

“On behalf of 150,000 members of the National Association of Social Workers, thank you for introducing Michelle’s law, S. 400...We appreciate your leadership on this issue and look forward to working with you to enact this important

legislation that will ensure that college students who take medically necessary leave of absence are eligible to maintain their health insurance coverage.”

- Elizabeth Clark, Executive Director

- ***American Hospital Association***

“Unfortunately, Michelle passed away and is not here to enjoy the benefits of your good work on this issue. Thanks to your introduction of this bill, other students and their families might not face the same no-win scenario.”

- Rick Pollack, Executive Vice President

- ***National Kidney Foundation***

"Young adults faced with a life-threatening illness cannot be expected to remain enrolled as a full-time student while undergoing rigorous treatment. This legislation will enable students to focus on what is most important, their treatment." - John Davis, CEO

Michelle’s Law was passed at the state level in New Hampshire in June 2006 and applies to state-regulated insurance plans. New York enacted similar legislation in 1999. The Sununu-Gregg-Clinton bill covers plans regulated at the federal level by the Employee Retirement Security Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and does not impact other state-regulated insurance plans.

The following specific provisions are included in the bi-partisan legislation:

- Maintains existing health coverage up to one year for full-time student "dependents" – age 18 or older who are enrolled in a post-secondary educational institution – whose leave has been certified by a physician;
- Should a student’s parents or caregiver switch coverage, a successor ERISA plan that covers dependent care would have to abide by a student’s approved leave of absence;
- Summer or semester breaks would not disqualify the medical leave.