



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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Grassley Secures Funding for Bill to Help Special Needs Children

WASHINGTON – The budget blueprint that the Senate passed today contains a reserve fund to pay for the *Family Opportunity Act* (S. 321), the legislation from Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley to improve health coverage for children with special needs. Grassley and the bill's other lead sponsor, Sen. Edward Kennedy, secured the reserve fund via an amendment to the budget blueprint legislation.

“The reserve fund guarantees that we can pay for this legislation if it passes out of the Finance Committee,” Grassley said. “That guarantee is critical to the bill's success. The Senate budget rules require that bills like this are funded. I agree that getting a funding guarantee is the responsible way to legislate.”

The Grassley/Kennedy amendment created a reserve fund of \$7.9 billion over 10 years for the *Family Opportunity Act*. The money would cover the bill's full cost and becomes available if the Finance Committee reports the bill out of committee. The House-passed budget blueprint also sets aside money for the measure. The *Family Opportunity Act* is pending in the House as well as in the Senate and has bipartisan support in both chambers. The bill has 67 Senate co-sponsors and 147 House co-sponsors (the House bill is H.R. 600).

Grassley was inspired to pursue the legislation by a family originally from Red Oak, Iowa. The Arnolds moved to the Baltimore-area to obtain medical care for 11-year-old Adam, who was born with a short thigh bone. Adam's mother, Melissa, has worked hard to obtain promotions but can't accept any more pay raises without jeopardizing Adam's Medicaid coverage. Adam's 18-year-old brother, Daniel, can't work even part-time for fear of pushing the family's income over the Medicaid limit.

Grassley's legislation would allow states to create options for families such as the Arnolds to buy into the Medicaid system while continuing to work. Grassley said parents would pay for Medicaid coverage on a sliding scale. In many cases, Medicaid would supplement private health insurance coverage. No one would have to become impoverished or stay impoverished to secure Medicaid for their child.

Grassley said Medicaid is critical to the well-being of children with multiple medical needs. It covers a lot of services that these children need, such as physical therapy and medical equipment. Private health plans often are much more limited in what they cover. Many parents can't afford needed services or multiple co-payments out-of-pocket.

“Parents of children with disabilities should have the same opportunities as adults with disabilities,” Grassley said. “Everybody wants to use their talents to the fullest potential, and every parent wants to provide as much as possible for his or her children. We should give states the flexibility to provide families with options, without the federal government getting in the way.”

