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Contact: Carol Guthrie  
(202) 224-4515

## BAUCUS PRAISES EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

*Senator strongly supports aid for families moving from welfare to work*

**Washington, DC** – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) voiced strong support tonight for a three-month extension of the Temporary Medical Assistance (TMA) program which passed unanimously in the Senate this evening. TMA allows families moving from welfare to work to continue receiving health care coverage through Medicaid as parents begin to earn too much to qualify for traditional Medicaid, but not enough to afford health care coverage for their families. Baucus also called for Congress to extend the assistance that TMA provides for a longer term, to avoid putting the program at risk with the current short-term funding practice. He has also said that Congress should consider separating TMA from the unrelated abstinence education grants with which it has historically moved in the Senate.

**“TMA provides Medicaid coverage for families who are fulfilling their responsibilities exactly as we have asked. They are getting jobs, working hard and earning a living,”** said Baucus. **“We must fulfill our responsibility to make sure that these families are healthy and well cared for while getting back on their feet. I know that there are people who have real questions about the effectiveness of the abstinence grants attached to this program—I’m one of those people—but TMA is too important in the lives of too many people for us to turn our backs on it.”**

It is estimated that nearly two million Americans receive health care coverage through the TMA program. Federal law permanently requires four months of health care coverage through TMA for families who lose Medicaid eligibility when they receive increased child or spousal support payments or as a result of increased earned income or hours of employment. The Social Security Act of 1988 expanded the program to provide at least six and up to 12 months of coverage for families who lose Medicaid due to growing earnings from work. That provision was extended in the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006. Since 2001, the program has been funded by a series of short-term extensions, the most recent of which was set to expire on June 30, 2007.

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