

Written Testimony of Tobi Drabczyk
Senate Finance Subcommittee Hearing on Children's Health Care
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Good afternoon. My name is Tobi Drabczyk and I am from Walkersville, which is in Frederick County, Maryland. My husband, Kevin, and I have been married for 18 years and we are the parents of four children: Our oldest daughter, Severa, is 14. Our son, Mitchell is 12. And we have two younger daughters: Jocelyn, who is 3 and Arwen, who is 16 months.

Kevin has had a job ever since I have known him – he has always worked. Sometimes his job came with health insurance, but sometimes we haven't been so lucky. Right now, Kevin is the Maintenance Supervisor for an apartment complex. He earns \$36,000 a year. The health insurance he gets through his job covers only him — it would cost our family about \$500 per month to cover the children and me, and that's just too expensive for us.

When I became pregnant with Jocelyn, I read about Maryland's medical assistance program and I called the Health Department. They helped me sign up and also told me that both Severa and Mitchell would qualify for the children's health insurance program, MCHP. For me, the coverage was incredibly important. It turned out that I had gestational diabetes. I had to monitor my blood sugar several times a day – and just the cost of the test strips was more than I could afford. Because of the insurance, I was able to get the care I needed and Jocelyn was born a healthy baby.

Kevin and I are very fortunate that our children are generally healthy – but we have to deal with routine illnesses just like all parents. Thanks to MCHP, our babies have been able to get their vaccinations and when the older ones have had ear infections — which are so painful — we've been able to get the antibiotics the doctor prescribes. On \$36,000 a year, we often find ourselves living paycheck to paycheck. There are times when we are short on the gas money my husband needs to drive to work and there are times when money for food is tight. But, we have never had to choose between those things and our children's health. Because of MCHP, I can get the medicine the children need when they need it as opposed to when I can figure out how to budget for it.

We're not parents who take our children to the doctor for every little snuffle — but about a year ago, we found ourselves in a scary situation with our son. Mitchell had been having arm tics since he was about six years old. They came and went, but then they began getting worse. He also started to have other symptoms – vocal tics and sharp movements of his neck. We were seriously worried that he might have a brain tumor. One day it was clear that something was really wrong and my husband took Mitchell to the emergency room. After some preliminary exams, we were referred to a pediatric neurologist who tested our son's motor skills and did blood tests, ruling out many possibilities. Eventually, Mitchell was diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome. Again, we are very lucky. Without MCHP, we would never have been able to afford the specialists and all the tests. We'd still be wondering what was happening to our child. MCHP helped allay our terrible fears.

Mitchell is doing just fine. His case is very mild so he does not need any medication and we learned that Tourette's Syndrome slows down as children get older. With MCHP, we know we can take him for the check-ups he needs.

I hope I have explained how important MCHP is to our family. We are a family that works hard, we pay our taxes — but we just need a little bit of help. With MCHP we can be sure that our children stay healthy. That's what all parents want for their children. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today.