Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ OR Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

As a pediatrician in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I am deeply concerned about Alabama’s budget crisis as it pertains to Medicaid. More than \_\_\_\_% of children in my practice are covered by Medicaid, which provides a critical safety net for their health, now in childhood and later in life.

I understand how absolutely daunting it must be to find monies in this economically challenged legislative session and the hard decisions that the legislature has to make on this issue. I urge you, however, to give careful consideration before passing the proposed General Fund budget that would severely cripple Alabama’s Medicaid program, especially the impacts on children. Any reforms to our current program must encompass a broad range of input, especially from Medicaid providers, and consider information specific to Alabama.

Did you know that half of all babies born in Alabama—30,000—have Medicaid coverage and approximately 51 percent of all children in Alabama are covered by Medicaid, but that the care for a child is only half of what it costs to care for an adult on Medicaid? Children are a better value and provide the highest return on investment in our state. Their healthcare is as important as their education!

Also, it’s important to say that all of Alabama’s healthcare providers depend on Medicaid to sustain healthcare services for *every* citizen of our state. The dollars Medicaid pays providers to care for Medicaid patients support personnel, equipment and other overhead costs that ensure all have access to care. *In many rural and inner city areas, the doctors and hospitals that treat Medicaid patients might not survive were it not for the Medicaid volume.*  *Alabama Medicaid spending, with its federal match, generates jobs, income and state tax revenues*.

I know there are several bills to increase the cigarette tax to help the strapped General Fund. According to public health statistics, an increase of $1.00 per pack would create new annual state revenue of $213.3 million, keep 73,200 children from becoming addicted smokers, and save 30,700 lives from premature smoking-cased death. I urge you to please pass this increase to invest in child health and consider all possible new revenues to save Medicaid for Alabama’s children.

Sincerely,