

**Testimony of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition  
Submitted to the  
Appropriations Committee  
March 4, 2011**

**Re: Budget Changes to the HUSKY Program**

In general, BCAC supports the governor's proposed budget. We are pleased that the governor is proposing a series of revenue enhancement measures that are critically needed to mitigate damaging cuts to services accessed by struggling families.

We support conversion of Medicaid to non-risk model, expanding Medicaid coverage of smoking cessation services to all adults, and upgrading the Eligibility Management System. However, we do have some concerns about the impact of some of the proposed budget cuts on children and their families in the Medicaid program.

Co-pays for medical services and prescriptions

The governor's budget proposes co-pays of up to \$3 on some children and most adults for preventive care and other services. Low-income parents are "cash-strapped". Lacking the money to pay for co-payments, parents will forego necessary medical care. Studies show that when faced with co-pays (ranging from 50 cents to \$3), people on limited incomes reduce prescription drug use, outpatient care and preventive medical and dental care. The long term cost of delaying needed medical and dental care far out ways the revenue anticipated from co-pays. We urge that co-pays not be imposed for children and/or adults on Medicaid or HUSKY.

Reduction in dental services for parents and other adults

The budget proposes limiting regular dental check-up, cleanings and x-rays to once per year for adults, and tightening up criteria for determining the medical necessity or procedures for both adults and children. While we applaud Medicaid coverage of adult dental services, preventive dental care is integral to good health. Untreated dental conditions can lead to diabetes, heart disease and blood infections. Check-ups twice a year can help prevent more costly emergency care. We urge restoring full coverage for preventive dental services for adults and maintaining current criteria for medical necessity for all Medicaid recipients to ensure that needed dental services are received in a timely manner.

Medicaid coverage for medical interpretation services

The budget proposes delaying coverage of medical interpretation services for Medicaid beneficiaries who have limited English proficiency until July 2013. According to the U.S. Census, more than 27,000 Bridgeport residents have limited English proficiency. Non-English-speaking patients are not always able to accurately describe their symptoms to the doctor, and the risk of misdiagnosis is extremely high. They may not understand the doctor's directions and, as a result, may not follow the recommended treatment correctly. Patients with limited English proficiency often rely on family members or staff at their doctor's offices to interpret for them. Most of these informal interpreters are not professionally trained medical interpreters. Not only

is the patient's privacy compromised, but so is the accuracy of the interpreter's information. We urge you to cover medical interpretation services for Medicaid recipients to ensure safety and accuracy for children and families.

Independent performance monitoring of the HUSKY program

The proposed budget eliminates funding for independent performance monitoring of the HUSKY program. Connecticut Voices for Children has been conducting independent analyses of health service utilization by children and families on HUSKY for such services as well-child visits, dental care, asthma, and emergency care. This analysis will be critically important as the state transitions to a non-risk model of care. We urge that funding is restored so the effectiveness of the HUSKY program can be independently monitored.

Submitted by,

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