

Human Services Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 4, 2021

10:00 AM in Zoom and YouTube Live

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 AM by Chairman, Sen. Moore M. S22.

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Berthel E. S32; Cabrera J. S17; Lesser M. S09; Moore M. S22

Representatives: Abercrombie C. 083; Arora H. 151; Buckbee B. 067; Case J. 063;  
Cook M. 065; Dathan L. 142; Garibay J. 060; Goupil C. 035;  
Hughes A. 135; Mastrofrancesco G. 080; Santiago H. 084;  
Simmons C. 144; Sredzinski J. 112; Stallworth C. 126; Wood T.  
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Absent were:

Senators:

Representatives: Butler L. 072

Sen. Moore made opening remarks and reviewed the guidelines for Committee participation.

Sen. Moore requested a consent calendar for concepts to be raised. Rep. Case agreed to the consent calendar for items 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, and all change of reference items in Section IV. Sen. Moore asked for a motion to create the consent calendar. The motion was made by Rep. Case and seconded by Rep. Dathan. A voice vote was held, and the motion passed.

Item #2: Sen. Moore asked for a motion to raise the concept, An Act Expanding Access To Medical Assistance. The motion was made by Rep. Hughes and seconded by Rep. Dathan.

Discussion:

Rep. Case raised concerns about the bill.

Rep. Arora raised concerns about the cost of the bill and asked if it would result in increased Medicaid spending. His numbers suggest an increase from \$3 Billion to \$4.5 Billion.

Rep. Abercrombie suggested Rep Arora's numbers were in error and noted that this bill aims to expand access.

Rep. Arora responded that the issue is eligibility and expanding access would add nearly 1 million individuals to Medicaid access. He explained his concerns that Medicaid would compete with ACA insurances.

Rep. Case stated that he was flagging this bill with a no vote. He commented that OFA and Appropriations would be able to determine the actual cost of the bill.

Rep. Arora also noted that moving this bill would signal a lack of confidence in the ACA insurance programs.

Rep. Santiago stated that the Husky program and ACA insurances do not compete.

Sen. Lesser stated that he appreciated Rep Arora's remarks and will support raising this concept.

Sen. Moore called for a roll call vote. The motion passed with 12 voting yea and 7 voting nay and 1 absent not voting.

Item #5: Sen. Moore asked for a motion to raise the concept, An Act Expanding Medicaid Coverage For Maternity Care To Twelve Months Post-Pregnancy. The motion was made by Rep. Abercrombie and seconded by Rep. Dathan.

Sen. Moore called for a roll call vote. The motion passed with 13 voting yea and 6 voting nay and 1 absent not voting.

Item #6: Sen. Moore asked for a motion to raise the concept, An Act Concerning Removing Liens On The Property Of Public Assistance Beneficiaries. The motion was made by Rep. Abercrombie and seconded by Rep. Dathan.

Discussion:

Rep. Case and Sen. Berthel indicated they would be flagging the bill with a no vote.

Sen. Moore called for a roll call vote. The motion passed with 12 voting yea and 7 voting nay and 1 absent not voting.

Item #13: Sen. Moore asked for a motion to raise the concept, An Act Requiring The State To Provide Medical Assistance For Prenatal Care. The motion was made by Rep. Hughes and seconded by Rep. Dathan.

Discussion:

Rep. Case questioned whether this bill had been raised in a previous session and Rep. Abercrombie clarified that it was a raised bill new this session.

Rep. Wood was concerned as to why items #5 and #13 had not been combined.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that keeping them separate would reduce confusion in a public hearing, noting that they could be combined later in the process.

Rep. Wood asked for clarification of whether items #5 and #13 both refer to Medicaid, and Rep. Abercrombie answered that they both do.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco asked if Medicaid recipients already receive prenatal care.

Sen. Lesser explained that there are instances where a mother may not be covered but because the infant will be a U.S citizen, they would be eligible for Medicaid coverage. Further, if a mother is an undocumented immigrant, and the child was still unborn, the child would be considered a U.S citizen and the mother could then receive prenatal care.

Sen. Moore called for a roll call vote. The motion passed with 13 voting yea and 5 voting nay and 2 absent not voting.

Item #16: Sen. Moore asked for a motion to raise the concept, An Act Allowing Certain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Beneficiaries To Use Electronic Benefit Transfer Cards At Participating Restaurants. The motion was made by Rep. Hughes and seconded by Rep. Simmons.

Discussion:

Rep. Case commented that he would be flagging this concept because of the high costs placed on restaurants, which he noticed in the Rhode Island pilot program.

Rep. Abercrombie stated that the pilot program was carried out across the country and suggested that the committee take a look at its development.

Sen. Moore called for a roll call vote. The motion passed with 12 voting yea and 6 voting nay and 2 absent not voting.

Item #17: Sen. Moore asked for a motion to raise the concept, An Act Providing Medicaid Coverage For Certified Dietitian Nutritionists. The motion was made by Rep. Hughes and seconded by Rep. Santiago.

Discussion:

Rep. Case commented that the bill allows a patient to bypass a referral from an MD to see a dietitian and have it covered by insurance.

Sen. Berthel echoed the comments of Rep. Case.

Sen. Moore called for a roll call vote. The motion passed with 12 voting yea and 7 voting nay and 1 absent not voting.

Item #18: Sen. Moore asked for a motion to raise the concept, An Act Providing Medical Assistance To Low-Income Residents Regardless Of Immigration Status. The motion was made by Rep. Hughes and seconded by Rep. Simmons.

Discussion:

Rep. Case stated that he was flagging this bill with a no vote, indicating his concerns were primarily financial.

Rep. Mastrofrancesco asked if this concept was specifically for undocumented individuals since the state already provides low-income residents with medical assistance.

Rep. Wood expressed confusion over the title of the bill, and Rep. Abercrombie explained that the Screening Committee does not alter the title of bills.

Sen. Berthel noted that he shared the concerns of his colleagues.

Rep. Hughes commented that due to the pandemic, this bill is more important than ever. Rep. Wood commented that she hopes to hear from non-profit providers who have been treating this population.

Sen. Moore called for roll call vote. The motion passed with 12 voting yea and 7 voting nay and 1 absent not voting.

Sen. Moore asked for a motion to create a second consent calendar, which included all change of reference items under section IV of the agenda. The motion was made by Rep. Abercrombie and seconded by Rep. Case.

Sen. Moore asked for a motion to approve the first consent calendar, which was made by Rep. Case and seconded by Rep. Cook. Sen. Moore called for a roll call vote on the first consent calendar, which included items 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 15. The motion passed with 19 voting yea, 0 voting nay and 1 absent not voting.

Sen. Moore asked for a motion to approve the second consent calendar, which was made by Rep. Wood and seconded by Rep. Sredzinski. Sen. Moore called for a roll call vote on the second consent calendar, which included all five items under section IV of the agenda. The motion passed with 19 voting yea, 0 voting nay and 1 absent not voting.

The clerk announced that the next meeting would be Thursday, February 11, 2021, as well as a tentative Public Hearing on February 16, 2021.

Sen. Moore recessed the meeting at 11:08 and announced that votes would remain open until 1:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM.

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Gianna Vollano  
Assistant Clerk

Heather Ferguson-Hull  
Committee Clerk