

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-313

AN ACT CONCERNING CONTINUOUS MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY FOR

Title: CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF SIX.

Vote Date: 3/19/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/14/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Children eligible for Medicaid coverage in the state of Connecticut may be eligible for either the HUSKY A or HUSKY B program. Both of these programs currently require annual renewal processes for all applicants. During the renewal period, children may be unenrolled from the program although they are still eligible for coverage. This bill would enact continuous enrollments for all children under the age of six. From the time that a child is deemed eligible upon initial application until they turn six, their coverage would be automatically renewed every year.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity, Lead Asian American Pacific Islander Policy Analyst; supports this bill stating that it addresses critical gaps in healthcare access and promotes long-term health outcomes. It is also stated that studies have shown uninsured children are more than twice as likely as insured children to forego physician visits over a twelve-month period. It is stated that investing in early childhood healthcare has proven to yield long-term socioeconomic benefits in the future.

Department of Social Services (DSS), Commissioner, Andrea Barton Reeves; opposes this bill stating that there are short and medium-term costs associated with the higher levels of enrollment that will result from continuous enrollment. It is also stated that the process for obtaining a Section 1115 Waiver requires time and resources from the Department that are not currently available.

Office of the Healthcare Advocate, Acting Healthcare Advocate, Sean King; supports this bill stating that continuous enrollment would eliminate gaps in healthcare access during critical stages of development. It is also stated that continuous enrollment for children may reduce the risk of them developing preventable health conditions.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

American Heart Association, Government Relations Director, Jim Williams; supports this bill stating that it would ensure babies and young children eligible for Medicaid have access to preventative, specialized, and emergency health care. It is also stated that continuous Medicaid enrollment promotes health equity, protects children and their families from expensive medical bills, and drives more efficient healthcare spending.

Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs and Physician-in-Chief, Dr. Juan Salazar; supports this bill stating that more than half of patients at Connecticut Children's who require an inpatient stay rely on the HUSKY program along with more than two-thirds of those who require care in the Emergency Room. It is also stated that children with a consistent source of health care coverage are more likely to access the services that they need and are less likely to be absent from school due to illness.

CT Community Nonprofit Alliance, Policy Intern, Sydney de Lannoy; supports this bill stating that continuous enrollment addresses a significant gap in our current healthcare system. It is also stated that continuous enrollment will allow nonprofits to access Medicaid reimbursement for services they may already provide.

Health Equity Solutions, Senior Manager of Policy, Kally Moquete; supports this bill stating that continuous enrollment for children under the age of six would address critical gaps in the system and promote health equity. It is stated that infants and young children require consistent access to healthcare services during their early developmental years. It is also stated that continuous enrollment would benefit low-income and minority families in Connecticut.

Connecticut Resident, Aubrey Crowe; supports this bill stating that the cost of healthcare is a problem in Connecticut that must be addressed. It is also stated that the average cost for one person to spend one day in the hospital is nearly \$11,000.

Connecticut Resident, Rachel Kane; supports this bill stating that, of the 164,861 people who were unenrolled from the HUSKY program between May and December 2023, 27% were children. It is also stated that a 2016 study found that 23.4% of children in HUSKY A and B lost coverage at least once within the calendar year. It is stated that many of the adolescent disenrollments were due to administrative reasons rather than ineligibility.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Connecticut Resident, Walter Lewis; opposes this bill stating that children should not be on Medicaid.

Reported by: Jaclyn Rauch

Date: 3/27/24