
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 397

AN ACT EXPANDING MEDICAID COVERAGE OF SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CARE.

SUMMARY

This bill makes several changes to expand access to Medicaid-covered health care for Connecticut schoolchildren. Specifically, it:

1. requires the Department of Social Services (DSS) commissioner, in consultation with the education commissioner, to seek federal approval for a Medicaid waiver to provide Medicaid coverage for all students (1) at a Title I school and (2) who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, regardless of if they would otherwise qualify for Medicaid;
2. requires the DSS commissioner to amend the Medicaid state plan to cover health care services in school nurse's offices for eligible students (§ 2);
3. starting in FY 25, increases, from 50 to 80 percent, the portion of federal Medicaid-eligible special education and related services reimbursements distributed to schools (§ 3); and
4. establishes an interagency coalition to coordinate and make recommendations to maximize federal funding for Medicaid-eligible health services in Connecticut public schools.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except that the provisions on nurse's offices and increasing the percent of Medicaid reimbursements distributed to schools are effective July 1, 2024.

§ 1 — MEDICAID COVERAGE FOR STUDENTS AT TITLE I SCHOOLS OR QUALIFYING FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

The bill requires the DSS commissioner, in consultation with the education commissioner and by October 1, 2024, to apply for a Medicaid waiver to give Medicaid coverage to (1) all students at Title I schools (i.e., schools that receive federal funding due to their high percentage of low-income students) and (2) all students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch in Connecticut, regardless of whether a student meets Medicaid income eligibility requirements or qualifies for federal services for students with disabilities.

Under the bill, the education commissioner must consult with the DSS commissioner to develop a form for parents or legal guardians to opt out if their student qualifies but they do not want the student to have Medicaid coverage. This form must be available (1) by mail or on the Department of Education's website and (2) in multiple languages, including English, Polish, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and other languages consistent with the demographic profile of students enrolled in the state in bilingual education programs for kindergarten through 12th grade.

The bill requires the education commissioner, in consultation with the DSS commissioner, to develop and distribute to each local or regional school board a list of Medicaid reimbursement-eligible services. DSS must make quarterly grant payments to school boards for 80 percent of the federal Medicaid reimbursement for claims made for students. The bill allows these payments to be estimates of the amounts due to the boards.

The bill requires the DSS commissioner, annually by January 1, and in consultation with the education commissioner, to report to the Appropriations, Children, Education, and Human Services committees on Medicaid reimbursement for school health services and recommendations for expanding Medicaid services provided in schools.

§ 4 — INTERAGENCY COALITION

The bill establishes an interagency coalition consisting of the education and DSS commissioners and the Office of Policy and Management secretary, or their designees, to coordinate and make

recommendations on maximizing federal Medicaid funding for health services in public schools. The coalition must (1) hold its first meeting within 60 days after the bill passes and (2) meet at least quarterly.

The bill requires the coalition to report annually by January 1 to the Appropriations, Children, Education, and Human Services committees on the following:

1. the number of students receiving Medicaid-covered health services in the previous school year and any change in their proportion of the school's total enrollment;
2. steps taken to expand Medicaid coverage for student health services, including any Medicaid waivers or state plan amendments; and
3. a survey of what other states are doing to expand Medicaid-covered health services for students.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 15 Nay 7 (03/19/2024)