

Doctors for Early Childhood

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Chair Liz Olson, House Ways and Means Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives, St Paul

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Re House File 2286, Continuous Eligibility Medical Assistance

Dear Chair Olson, Vice Chair Edelson, Lead Garofalo, Chair Noor, and Committee Members,

I am Dr Dale Dobrin writing on behalf of Doctors for Early Childhood, an education and advocacy group. We work in coalition with others, including the Prenatal -3 Coalition. I am writing in favor of HF 2286, a bill to establish new eligibility rules for Medical Assistance and Minnesota Care for people qualifying once. In particular, we speak to the eligibility of children from birth to 6 years of age.

As of the declaration of the end of the public health emergency (COVID 19), expected to be in early May, those on Medicaid (Medical Assistance is Minnesota) will be required to prove eligibility. Oregon and Washington lead the way by already passing legislation (Sept, 2022 in Oregon) to provide continuous eligibility from birth to age 6. These states' work has been informed by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, Joan Alker Executive Director. I believe Minnesota has relied on the Center's work as well.

The essence of the matter is yearly or more often recurring eligibility tends to get bogged down in administrative paperwork, and children are de enrolled – leading to lack of coverage for which they are eligible. This leads to delays in treating illness and injuries and children not getting necessary preventive care (so called “well child care”, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics), including immunizations. These delays have been shown to worsen illness and be more costly to Medical Assistance/Medicaid when treatment is finally obtained. Medicaid provides for retrospective payment going back 3 months.

From the economics point of view, the Georgetown Center has data showing that continuous enrollment to age 6 saves between \$400 - \$600 per enrollee. In Minnesota's case, recent data show approximately 180,000 children 0-6 years of age are covered by Medical Assistance. At \$500 per child enrollee, this saves \$90,000,000.

Since data show that virtually all eligible children continue to qualify, it seems obvious that preventing illness, preventing progression of diseases and continuing preventive care should not be interrupted. And continuous funding to age 6 will save around \$90,000,000. Please support this legislation. We are pleased you are moving this important legislation along and look forward to its passage into law.

Many thanks, and warm regards!

References: Research and Reports, see "Medicaid and CHIP Continuous Coverage" article by Cathy Hope, October 7, 2022, ccf.georgetown.edu.

Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, Center for Children and Families, Continuous Coverage in Medicaid and CHIP, July 2021, pg 6.