



HEALTHY MOTHERS, HEALTHY BABIES
Coalition of Georgia

HMHB Legislative Update
3-26-07

After a two week recess the House and Senate reconvened on Monday March 19 and met for two days, completing 29 out of 40 possible legislative days. Both chambers will reconvene on Tuesday, March 27, which will be the 30th legislative day. A very long day is expected, as Tuesday is the last day for bills to move from one chamber to another.

PEACHCARE UPDATE

State funding to fill the PeachCare gap was included in the House version of the amended FY 2007 budget that passed the House last week. Although the budget is stalled due to disagreement between the House and Senate, leaders from both chambers confirm that they intend to keep PeachCare funding in place.

HB 340 (Speaker Glenn Richardson) threatens to cut PeachCare eligibility and services.

HB 340 passed House Health and Human Services with little comment and no debate and is scheduled for a vote on the House floor on Tuesday, March 27. HB 340 would:

- Cut PeachCare income eligibility limits from 235% of the Federal Poverty Limit (FPL) to 200%. Children in a family of 3 with a family income over \$34,340 would not be able to get PeachCare, down from the current limit of \$40,350 for 3.
- Allow the Department of Community Health to cut income limits even further to 185% of FPL or raise it back as far as 225%. Georgia already has one of the highest rates of uninsured children in the country.
- Would cut back current basic services. Dental and vision coverage would be optional and require additional premiums. These services are standard in all but one state's child health program.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Please contact the your State Representative (House member) and ask them to vote **“No” on House Bill 340!**

You can find your representative's contact information at (CTRL-click)

http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2007_08/house/07alpha.html

Increase funding for the Babies Born Healthy Program. Babies Born Healthy is the only government program that pays for prenatal care for low income pregnant women who do not qualify for Medicaid. Due to the growing number of women in this category,

the program has consistently run out of funds before the fiscal year ends. Current funding for FY 2007 is \$3.26 million which serves approximately 5000 women. The women who are eligible but not served due to lack of funds usually end up appearing at a hospital to deliver their baby having had no prenatal care. **UPDATE: The amended FY 2007 budget passed the House with \$1 million in additional funds for Babies Born Healthy. When the House learned however that the Senate wanted to use the amended budget only for the Department of Education midterm adjustment and a few other emergencies, including PeachCare, the House refused to forward the FY 2007 budget to the Senate. It is unclear how the House-Senate disagreement will affect this and other items included in the House version of the budget.**

Provide funding for the Cervical Cancer Prevention Vaccine. DHR requested \$4.3 million for the new human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine and Governor Perdue included the funding in his FY 2008 budget. This funding will allow vaccination of uninsured and underinsured girls. The \$4.3 million in the budget will purchase 42,327 doses. Three doses per individual are required. This funding is intended to provide the vaccine for adolescents who are not eligible for federally funded vaccines and who do not have private insurance. HMHB believes that this vaccine should be available for any parent/adult who would like to have the vaccination. Senator Don Balfour (R-9th) introduced SB 155, which would require female students to be vaccinated for the human papillomavirus (HPV) prior to entering the 6th grade. Some advocates have questioned mandating the HPV vaccine, especially because the vaccine is relatively new. **UPDATE: SB 155 appears to be dead for this year.**

Oppose legislation that threatens health insurance benefits such as mammograms, pap smears and childhood immunizations. Many of the current state mandates are for services that ensure prevention and early detection of disease. Bills have been introduced in recent years that would allow health insurance to be sold in Georgia without covering such services. HMHB will continue to oppose such legislation. **SB 28 (Sen. Judson Hill, R-Marietta) has splintered into an entire legislative package, including SB 150, SB 151 and SB 153. SB 153** the “Georgia Consumer Driven Health Insurance Plan” has been amended to include a variety of health insurance mandates relating to cancer screening and treatment and was voted out as a committee substitute. **UPDATE: SB 153 passed the Senate on 3/20.**

Other Legislation

Two bills on newborn screening were considered this week. **SB 289 (Sen. Don Balfour, R-Snellville)** would have allowed private labs to perform newborn screening as an alternative to the state operated newborn screening lab. A report from the State Auditor evaluated four states that have moved to privatization of newborn screening and raised serious concerns about such a move in Georgia. Senate Health and Human Services failed to pass SB 289 this week. A similar bill (**HB 352 by Representative Donna Sheldon, R-Dacula**) failed to pass the House Health and Human Services Committee. **UPDATE: Neither of these bills appears to be moving. Testimony from the State Auditor before the Senate Health and Human Services Committee recommended that the newborn screening testing process remain with state facilities.**

This update was prepared for HMHB by Mary Frances Williams. If you have questions, email her at mfwilliams@speakeasy.net