



HEALTHY MOTHERS, HEALTHY BABIES
Coalition of Georgia

HMHB Legislative Update
4-16-07

Legislators are down to their last few days and the pace has picked up considerably. When legislators took a break at the end of March, there were concerns about the impasse between the House and the Senate over the amended FY 2007 budget and the lack of progress on the FY 2008 budget. Within a matter of days, negotiations over the FY 2007 budget were completed and the House-Senate conference committee on the FY 2008 budget will probably begin meeting by Tuesday at the latest. House and Senate committees have been working hard as well and a flurry of bills is moving.

PEACHCARE UPDATE

HB 340 (Speaker Glenn Richardson) will be discussed in a public hearing in Senate Rules this morning, Monday, April 16. Senate Rules Chairman Don Balfour has stated that the committee will pass some version of HB 340. It is likely that the Senate will offer a substitute, perhaps along the lines of its task force report. Advocates are alarmed about HB 340 as it would lower the income eligibility ceiling from 250% of the federal poverty level to 200%. Vision and dental services would become optional and require an additional premium.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The Lt. Governor and the Senate can still save PeachCare, and indications are they may show more concern for children and working families.

Ask your own Senator to stand up for children and hard-working, tax-paying families by voting against HB 340. Please call **1-800-511-6259** to be linked to your senator's office.

Ask Lt. Governor Casey Cagle to stop HB 340. Let him know Georgia's children and hard-working, tax-paying families are counting on him to stand up for them.

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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. The amended FY 2007 budget passed the House with \$1 million in additional funds for Babies Born Healthy. **UPDATE: The House and Senate had a major disagreement over the amended FY 2007 budget when Senate budget leaders stripped everything out of the budget except items that met their definition of midyear emergency spending. As finalized, the budget for the last quarter of FY 2007 includes \$81 million for the PeachCare shortfall, funds for the midyear education adjustment to cover growth in public school enrollment, money for indigent defense and little else. Leadership on both sides reached a surprise agreement on a \$140 million property tax cut (about \$100 per homeowner). Funding recommended by the House for Babies Born Healthy was a casualty of this disagreement and the House version of the FY 2008 budget includes no new funds for BBH.**

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 for their child. 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. SB 155 appears to be dead for this year. **UPDATE: The House version of the FY 2008 budget has removed the requested funds for the HPV vaccine for girls.**

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” was amended to include only those health insurance mandates relating to cancer screening and treatment and was voted out as a committee substitute. **UPDATE: SB 153 passed the Senate and has been assigned to House Insurance. There are major problems with SB 153, including the fact that many current health insurance mandates, such as post-childbirth hospital stays, newborn coverage and well-child visits and immunizations are not included. We are being told that SB 153 will not be voted out of House Insurance but will continue to closely monitor the bill.**

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