

HMHB Legislative Update

2-5-07

Legislators were in session all week long. They will be in recess Monday, February 5th through Wednesday February 7th and will reconvene on Thursday, February 8th. Although it is customary for legislators to take a few days off at this point, work on the Amended FY 2007 budget has come to a halt while Governor Perdue and legislators await word from Washington, D.C. on how Congress will deal with the funding shortfall for the S-CHIP (State Children Health Insurance Program – PeachCare in Georgia).

Update on HMHB Legislative Items

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. **It is estimated that an additional \$2 million in funding would allow the program to serve all eligible women. HMHB is working to have this funding added to the FY 2008 budget. UPDATE: The House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees that deal with the DHR budget have held budget hearings, but work on the FY 2008 budget will not begin in earnest until the Amended FY 2007 budget is finished.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Contact members of the House Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee and encourage them to include additional funds for Babies Born Healthy in the FY 2008 budget. The program currently funded at \$3 million, runs out of funds 6 or 7 months into the fiscal year. Some health districts were out of funds by December 31.

Rep. Mark Butler, Chair (Dist.18, Carrollton) 404-463-2245 Capitol office	Rep. Len Walker (Dist.107, Loganville) 404-656-5139 Capitol
Rep. Jeff May, Secretary (Dist. 111, Monroe) 404-656-5105 Capitol	Rep. Stan Watson (Dist. 91, Decatur) 404-656-0220 Capitol
Rep. Buddy Carter (Dist. 159, Pooler) 404-656-0213 Capitol	Rep. Larry O’Neal (Dist. 146, Warner Robins) 404-656-5103 Capitol
Rep. Keith Heard (Dist. 114, Athens) 404-656-0220 Capitol	Rep. Chuck Sims (Dist. 169, Douglas) 404-656-0287 Capitol
Rep. Jerry Keen (Dist. 179, St. Simons Island) 404-656-5052 Capitol	Rep. Richard Royal (Dist. 171, Camilla) 404-656-0265 Capitol
Rep. Judy Manning (Dist. 32, Marietta) 404-656-7857 Capitol	Rep. Penny Houston (Dist. 170, Nashville) 404-656-0202 Capitol
Rep. Bobby Reese (Dist. 98, Sugar Hill) 404-656-0254 Capitol	

You can also contact members of the Senate Appropriations Human Development Subcommittee regarding funding for Babies Born Healthy.

Sen. Renee Unterman, Chair (Dist. 45, Buford) 404-463-1368 Capitol	Sen. Eric Johnson (Dist. 1, Savannah) 404-656-5109
Sen. Don Thomas, Vice Chair (Dist. 54, Dalton) 404-656-6436	Sen. Nancy Schaefer (Dist. 50, Turnerville) 404-463-1367
Sen. Greg Goggans (Dist. 7, Douglas) 404-463-5263	Sen. Valencia Seay (Dist. 34) 404-656-5095
Sen. Johnny Grant (Dist. 25, Milledgeville) 404-656-0082	Sen. Cecil Staton (Dist. 18, Macon) 404-656-5039
Sen. Steve Henson (Dist. 41, Tucker) 404-656-0085	Sen. Horacena Tate (Dist. 38, Atlanta) 404-463-8053

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. UPDATE: The \$4.3 million in the budget will purchase 42,327 doses. Three doses per individual are required. County health departments will receive some doses, but the majority will go to non-public health providers since only 20% of child/adolescent vaccines are given in public health departments. 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.**

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.

Monitor legislation, departmental policies and state budget proposals that would impact services or threaten adequate funding for PeachCare, Medicaid or other important preventive healthcare programs for women and children. Congress has not reauthorized funding for SCHIP (Federal State Children’s Health Insurance Program) resulting in a federal funds shortfall for Georgia of \$131 million. Funding is expected to run out prior to the end of the current fiscal year. **UPDATE: Governor Perdue traveled to Washington, D.C. last week to testify before Congress about the SCHIP funding shortfall. While Governor Perdue and other elected officials have done a good job of pressing Congress to take action, it is still important that Georgia fill the funding gap until federal funds become available so that our children do not lose coverage for any period of time.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Contact Governor Perdue today and ask him to fill the PeachCare funding gap so that families will know their children's coverage can continue. Ask Governor Perdue not to let these children face the dangers of going without insurance.

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Email: http://www.gov.state.ga.us/contact_dom.shtml

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

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