

Please get started immediately on contacts with your senator and Lt. Governor Casey Cagle!

We also feel that individual letters from organizations to the Lt. Gov asking him to stop HB 340 would be tremendously helpful.

Mailing address for Lt. Gov: The Honorable Lt. Governor Casey Cagle, 240 State Capitol, Atlanta, Georgia 30334

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Legislative Alert

3-28-2007

On to the Senate to protect children's PeachCare coverage and services!

Yesterday's House vote on HB 340 was disappointing, although it was not entirely unexpected. The House voted 101-63 for HB 340, with 16 people not voting. We needed 11 more no votes or non-votes to defeat the bill. (A bill requires 91 affirmative votes to pass). Because Speaker Richardson was the sponsor of HB 340, many legislators said they feared the consequences for them if they did not vote for it. Some told advocates and other legislators that they felt sick about their votes.

The Lt. Governor and the Senate can still save PeachCare, and indications are they may show more concern for children and working families. See HB 340 talking points below:

What you need to do now:

- Ask your own Senator to stand up for children and hard-working, tax-paying families by voting against HB 340 if it comes up.

Click here for Senate contact information:
http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2007_08/senate/senatelist.php

- 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.

TEL: (404) 656-5030
FAX: (404) 656-6739

Email: http://ltgov.georgia.gov/00/article/0.2086.2199618_2208307_11792200.00.html

Then,

Let your House member know how you feel about his or her vote on HB 340 yesterday (March 27th). If your representative voted no, please express appreciation. If your representative voted yes, though, please express your disappointment. **It is very important that House members hear from their constituents about this vote- it lets them know that you are paying attention and care about their actions on behalf of Georgia's children. If they do not hear from us, they think their constituents don't know or don't care about the issue!** Also, *there could be another opportunity for your representative to vote if the Senate changes the bill and sends it back. We will let you know if that happens. We need to make sure they vote right the next time.*

To see the vote on HB 340, click here:
http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2007_08/votes/hv0204.htm

For House contact information, go to the following link and click on "Fact Sheet"
http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2007_08/house/07alpha.html

Thank you for all you are doing! We still have a chance to protect health coverage for children in one of Georgia's most effective and popular programs.

Talking Points on HB 340

- **HB 340 jeopardizes Georgia's strides in ensuring our children have health care coverage.** Georgians believe all children should have health coverage. PeachCare provides essential support to children from low-income working families who otherwise would be without access to private insurance. HB 340 proposes far-ranging and radical changes to Georgia's very successful, cost-effective and efficient PeachCare program. HB 340 would have bad consequences for children, for Georgia's healthcare system and for all of us.
- **Children throughout Georgia rely on PeachCare. Every tenth Georgia child has PeachCare coverage.** Look at the map at this link to see how your area compares

to the rest of the state in percentage of children covered. In some areas, PeachCare covers one in six or even one in four children.

- **HB 340 would leave more children uninsured.** It would lower the income eligibility ceiling to 200% of the federal poverty level. Children in a family of three with income over \$34,320 would not be able to get PeachCare, down from the current \$40,350. With that ceiling, 3,000 to 5,000 children each year will be denied coverage. Georgia children are already more likely than children in most other state to be uninsured. We need coverage for more children, not fewer.
- **Cutting PeachCare eligibility would save very little in state dollars and would shift higher costs to all of us.** The “savings” in state funds for cutting eligibility would be minimal- between \$1.2 and 2.4 million per year, but cutting PeachCare would shift higher costs elsewhere. Children will go to emergency rooms for care, and some local governments will pick up the tab. Every Georgia family with private insurance already pays about \$750 per year extra to cover uninsured people. When parents have to stay out of work with sick children (more likely with children are uninsured) employers pay costs.
- **HB 340 would cut PeachCare service coverage for currently enrolled children. It would make dental and vision services optional at an additional premium.** Vision and dental benefits are standard in SCHIP plans in 49 of 50 states. Tooth decay is the single most chronic health disease of childhood. It is five times more common than asthma. A child who cannot see well cannot learn and will quickly fall behind in schools
- **Congress in not forcing Georgia to cut PeachCare eligibility.** In fact, Congress is expected to expand the State Child Health Insurance Program that funds PeachCare. On March 22nd, the Senate soundly defeated an amendment to limit SCHIP to children at or below 200% of poverty. Leaders in both houses of Congress are seeking funds to cover many more children as part of SCHIP reauthorization, not fewer. Also, six members of Georgia Congressional delegation have introduced legislation to reimburse the state for filling the current federal funding shortfall, without requiring PeachCare to lower eligibility requirements.

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