

HOUSE BILL NO. 230

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A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TO APPLY FOR AND IMPLEMENT CONTINUOUS ELIGIBILITY FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 6 IN THE HEALTHY MONTANA KIDS PLAN; ESTABLISHING LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND PURPOSE; REQUIRING REPORTS TO THE LEGISLATURE; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Continuous eligibility for young children enrolled in healthy Montana kids plan programs -- legislative findings and purpose -- direction to department of public health and human services. (1) The legislature finds that Montana voters approved a ballot initiative in 2008 to create the healthy Montana kids plan, which coordinated access to health coverage for children enrolled in the Montana medicaid program and the children's health insurance program and increased eligibility standards for those programs.

(2) The legislature further finds that fluctuations in family income can result in a child being disenrolled and subsequently reenrolled in the programs making up the healthy Montana kids plan multiple times before the child reaches 19 years of age.

(3) The legislature further finds that continuous eligibility for healthy Montana kids plan enrollees during the first 5 years of life:

(a) will provide consistent, predictable access to health care services at a time of critical early childhood development;

(b) will improve health outcomes by providing children with ongoing preventive care and by

1 preventing gaps in care that can occur when a family loses coverage and cannot afford necessary health care
2 services, including medications;

3 (c) may reduce the costs of health care services by allowing children to receive the right level of
4 care at the right time in the right setting and by lessening the chances that they will need emergency care or
5 treatment for conditions that have worsened because of a lack of care; and

6 (d) may improve a child's readiness for school because regular, preventive care may identify
7 physical, behavioral, and developmental concerns that can be addressed before the conditions affect school
8 performance.

9 (4) The legislature further finds that 5-year continuous eligibility will reduce administrative costs for
10 the department of public health and human services by reducing the need to redetermine a child's eligibility for
11 renewed or continued coverage under the healthy Montana kids plan.

12 (5) It is the purpose of the legislature to allow children enrolled in both the medicaid-funded and
13 children's health insurance program-funded portions of the healthy Montana kids plan to remain enrolled in
14 those programs for the first 5 years of life even if a change in family circumstances occurs that would otherwise
15 make the children ineligible for the programs.

16 (6) The legislature directs the department of public health and human services to apply to the
17 centers for medicare and medicaid services for the necessary waivers to allow for continuous eligibility for
18 children enrolled in the programs making up the healthy Montana kids plan through the end of the month in
19 which a child attains 6 years of age. Among other things, the department's research and demonstration waiver
20 applications must include but are not limited to testing of the following hypotheses:

21 (a) whether ongoing enrollment will:

22 (i) reduce the percentage of children disenrolled and reenrolled in the programs making up the
23 healthy Montana kids plan during the first 5 years of life;

24 (ii) increase the number of enrollees participating in well-baby and well-child visits, including
25 developmental assessments to the extent those assessments can be quantified; and

26 (iii) reduce the average monthly cost of services provided to enrollees under 6 years of age; and

27 (b) whether continuous eligibility will reduce administrative costs for the department.

28 (7) The department shall:

1 (a) notify the appropriate interim or standing committees of the legislature of the center for
2 medicare and medicaid services' decisions on the waivers within 30 days of the date the decisions are made;
3 and

4 (b) if a waiver request is approved, implement continuous eligibility for children covered by the
5 waiver decision no later than January 1, 2024.

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7 NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Effective date.** [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

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