



An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities

HD 2945/SD 1909

Lead Sponsors: Rep. Dave Rogers and Sen. Sal DiDomenico

Background

While over 98% of the Commonwealth's children have some form of health coverage, thousands of children and young adults with disabilities can only access safety net programs with strict limits on covered benefits. Immigration status is the only thing preventing these children from qualifying for MassHealth CommonHealth, a comprehensive coverage program for individuals with disabilities or complex health conditions. Expanding CommonHealth coverage to every young person in the Commonwealth with disabilities is a key step forward in improving health care access to for all children.

Why is this legislation needed?

- The safety net programs currently available to children and young adults without a formal immigration status do not cover important services that people with disabilities or complex medical and/or behavioral health conditions need, such as intensive home and community-based behavioral health care or medical supplies like wheelchairs and specialized formula.
- Lack of coverage for these services may result in children needing more acute, emergency or hospital-based care, staying in the hospital longer than necessary or not receiving care altogether.

Why is this a health equity issue?

- Comprehensive coverage is especially important for children and young people who have disabilities. Safety net programs do not cover important services and equipment they may need to thrive at home, in school and in their communities.
- Children and young adults in Massachusetts without a formal immigration status are not able to access the same level of coverage as other residents, even if they meet all other eligibility factors.
- Inadequate coverage puts additional stress on children and families who also are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; already experience additional barriers to health care, such as language access; and may face trauma, discrimination and economic insecurity.

What does this legislation do?

- This bill would expand MassHealth CommonHealth coverage to children and low-income young adults with disabilities whose only barrier to this coverage is immigration status, providing coverage for many crucial services that are currently out of reach.

For more information, please contact Yaminah Romulus at Health Care For All at yromulus@hcfama.org or 617-275-2975

CHAC Member Organizations

Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.
Alliance for Inclusion and Prevention
American Academy of Pediatrics MA Chapter
Association for Behavioral Healthcare
Boston Children's Hospital
Boston Medical Center
Boston Public Health Commission
Cambridge Health Alliance
Children's Law Center of Massachusetts
Children's League of Massachusetts
Children's Vision Massachusetts
Coalition for Social Justice
Codman Square Health Center
Community Catalyst
Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath)
East Boston Ecumenical Community Council (EBECC)
Federation for Children with Special Needs
Franciscan Children's
Health Care For All
The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts
Health Law Advocates
Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts
The Home for Little Wanderers
Joint Committee for Children's Health Care in Everett
Massachusetts Advocates for Children
Massachusetts Coalition of School-Based Health Centers
Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth
Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium
Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
Massachusetts Medical Society
Massachusetts Pediatric Home Nursing Care Campaign
Massachusetts School Based Health Alliance
Massachusetts School Nurse Organization, Inc.
Medical-Legal Partnership Boston
Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC)
National Association of Social Workers, MA Chapter
New England Alliance for Children's Health
Parent/Professional Advocacy League
Partners HealthCare
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley