

# Alaska State Legislature

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## Senator Bettye Davis

### **SB 5 “An Act relating to eligibility requirements for medical assistance for certain children and pregnant women; and providing for an effective date.”**

#### **Repercussions of the Unmet Health Care Needs of Alaska’s Uninsured Children**

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- The number of uninsured children in Alaska is estimated to be about 24,100 or 19% of the uninsured population (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2008-2009).
  - Over the last 10 years Alaska has seen a 31% decline in the number of children covered by private health insurance (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation).
  - Nationally, more than 80% of uninsured children are from working families (Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured).
  - Uninsured children have much higher health risks than do covered children. They receive less preventative care and are diagnosed at more advanced stages of illness (Kaiser, *supra*).
  - Uninsured children are more likely to develop throat, eye, and ear infections, serious dental problems, and chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes. They are more than five times as likely as insured children to have an unmet need for medical care and nine times more likely not to be examined by a regular doctor. They are also four times more likely to use emergency rooms which are much more costly than care in physicians’ offices (*Pediatrics* 105, 113; “Care for Children,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, 330).
  - Almost 1/3 of uninsured children received no medical treatment during a 1-year period between 2002 and 2003 (*Health Affairs* 23, no. 5, September-October 2004).
  - Uninsured children are 25% more likely to miss school than insured children (Children’s Defense Fund, Minnesota). Continued illness affects school performance and, in the long run, workforce participation (Southern Institute on Children and Families). A National Institute of Medicine study indicates that lack of insurance results in lost national economic productivity of \$65-\$130 billion annually.
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