

Jody Simpson

From: Judy Andree <jagster42@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2019 2:35 PM
To: Senate Health and Social Services
Subject: SB 7: Concerns about this bill from the League of Women Voters of Alaska



League of Women Voters of Alaska

February 19, 2019

Dear Members of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Alaska wishes to comment on Senate Bill 7, a bill that would seek a waiver to establish work requirements for certain adults who are eligible for the state medical assistance program or Medicaid. The League of Alaska opposes the bill as written for several reasons.

The stated purpose of the bill, as per the SB 7 Sponsor Statement, is to “ensure that limited resources are prioritized toward those most in need of Medicaid-related services” and to “encourage able-bodied Alaskans to reach their full potential by identifying a line of work or volunteerism” that they will participate in and in return receive Medicaid-covered healthcare services. The League supports universal coverage of basic health care needs because the health of all our citizens should be one of our top priorities. This bill describes a punitive approach to healthcare coverage that will add an additional layer of documentation to the application process. Given this additional step, there will be those who fall through the safety net and lose their healthcare coverage.

The second primary function of this bill is to require Medicaid recipients to work at least twenty hours a week to be eligible for healthcare coverage under Medicaid. To receive Medicaid assistance, every potential Medicaid recipient will have to provide documentation that shows they are either fulfilling the work requirement or they are in an exempt category. The League supports assisting citizens to reach their full potential. However, if SB 7 wants to assist “able-bodied” citizens to find work, there should be efforts focused directly on education, job training, and job placement assistance rather than a program that makes accessing healthcare coverage more difficult for those who might need the assistance. Those living in rural Alaska will be particularly at risk, given the lack of medical care locally, the lack of year-round jobs, and the lack of job placement agencies. Using subsistence and volunteerism as the work requirement gives a nod to rural living, but the documentation of that activity may prove burdensome.

Being employed, or living a subsistence life style, requires a certain level of healthiness and healthcare support. If you need healthcare to work, but need work to receive healthcare, that may produce a catch-22 dilemma. SB 7 conflates two major concerns: healthcare and employment, and focuses on one to force the other. It might be more productive to focus on each separately given the unique factors driving each, and for this reason the League of Women Voters of Alaska urges you to oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

Judy Andree, President

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-- Submitted by

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