

SB5

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Sen. Bettye Davis

From: Dave Bomalaski [dbomalaski@gci.net]
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2011 6:27 PM
To: Sen. Bettye Davis
Cc: Sen. Dennis Egan; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Kevin Meyer; Sen. Fred Dyson
Subject: The Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and SB 5
Attachments: DKC Expansion.docx

Dear Senator Davis,

The Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is in support of SB 5 and wishes to submit the following letter to the Senate hearings. Thank you on behalf of Alaska's children.

M. David Bomalaski, MD, FAAP
Legislative Representative
Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

March 21, 2011

The Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is in support of SB 5 and expansion of Denali Kid Care to 200% FPL.

Every child has medical needs that cannot be ignored. Denying coverage to a family in poverty does not change this fact. Alaska's huge size and minimally developed wilderness present a challenge in medically caring for its children. Denali KidCare (DKC) is the only means for many of these children to have access to local primary care, and when needed, the ability to reach specialty care in Anchorage. The federal government pays 64% of the cost of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP/DKC) for non-Alaska Native children and 100% for Alaska Native children. Alaska has some of the most stringent eligibility requirements in the United States, 175% Federal Poverty Limit, placing us at 48th out of the 50 states in covering our poorest children. Senate Bill 13 was overwhelmingly passed with bipartisan support during the last legislative session. It expands DKC back to 200% of the Federal Poverty Line, its original level when instituted in 1998, and more in line with the rest of the United States. The cost of this expansion is estimated to add less than \$1M to the annual State budget. Many legislators from both parties, including Governor Parnell, publically pledged support for this bill and claimed to recognize the importance of taking care of the basic health needs of our children. Suddenly, the Governor, who is a former finance committee chairman, reversed his support claiming he did not understand DKC funding and the potential for covering selective abortion services. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reports that 0.18% of DKC funding went to abortion related services last year. The service is permissible if deemed a medical necessity.

Prior to last year, expansion of children's healthcare was never once an abortion issue until Governor Parnell faced re-election and the republican primary. The Governor vetoed DKC expansion arguing that it was morally wrong to spend state funds on a medical plan with an abortion benefit. The Governor and his family are covered under the state workers plan called AlaskaCare (Wells Fargo Insurance Services). A call to the AlaskaCare benefits line reveals "abortion services are a covered benefit for employees and their dependents when deemed medically indicated." It appears the Governor is unconcerned with state funds paying for a healthcare plan with an abortion benefit, if the plan is for himself, his family, administration and staff. For Governor Parnell to claim that DKC expansion is an abortion bill simply does not ring true. Nearly every healthcare plan in the state has an allowance for some sort of abortion service, including the Governor's own. If the Governor truly believes that state funding should not be used towards a plan with abortion services, then he has the opportunity to take a stand with himself, his own family, his staff and administration. Not with the poor and vulnerable.

Alaska ranks at the bottom of the country in regards to domestic violence, rape and once again, children's healthcare coverage. This is not an abortion issue. It is an issue of social justice, of doing what is right. As a State, we can do better.

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Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Jody L. Butto, MD, FAAP
President
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