

From: Desiree Compton [dcompton@unitedwaymatsu.org]
Sent: Monday, April 04, 2011 3:35 PM
To: Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Dennis Egan; Sen. Joe Thomas; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Sen. Lesil McGuire
Cc: Mary.Grisco@elmendorf.af.mil
Subject: FW: SB 5, DKC eligibility, Friday April 8th, 9AM Senate Finance

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

The purpose of this correspondence is to ask that you please support Senate Bill 5 to increase Denali KidCare eligibility back to 200%. United Way of Mat-Su believes that every child should have health coverage and there are an estimated 18,000 uninsured children in Alaska.

I understand the concerns about funds being used to pay for abortions. Personally, I am a pro-life advocate who seeks to reduce the prevalence of abortions; furthermore, I completely disagree with legislation that uses tax money to fund abortions. I had my son when I was 19 years old and a major reason why I chose to raise him (rather than choose adoption) was that I was able to get him medical coverage through Denali Kid Care. In my opinion, the benefits of increased childcare for children in our state outweigh the costs associated with a minor percentage of these funds being used to fund abortions. I also speculate that the decision to veto the bill could will not reduce the prevalence of abortions and could potentially have the opposite effect as less women would qualify for health care coverage during their pregnancy for their child; thus, they may feel that abortion is the only affordable option. If the end goal is reduced prevalence's of abortion, I would advise that you attend to issues around informed consent to ensure that women are being adequately informed about their options and have had sufficient time in counseling to process their options prior to making a final decision. If a woman has made the decision to terminate her pregnancy, a lack of public funding for the operation is hardly a deterrent compared to the idea of completing a pregnancy and raising a child with no medical coverage. If this bill passes more pregnant women get a chance to deliver a healthy child through covered prenatal appointments and treatment.

Over 80% of the children receiving Denali Kid Care are from working families, but their employers either can't afford or simply don't provide employee health insurance. Many of the parents in these families work more than one job. A simple examination of the numbers demonstrates that a family of four (Mat-Su's average family size) with an income of \$55,140 a year (200%) with usual expenses cannot afford to purchase stand-alone health insurance for their kids. Denali Kid Care is an Alaskan solution that supports families, and helps parents raise healthy kids.

Children and teens covered by Denali KidCare receive a full range of prevention and treatment services, including doctor's visits, health check-ups and screenings, vision exams and eyeglasses, dental check-ups, cleanings and fillings, hearing tests and hearing aids, hospital care, speech therapy, physical therapy, mental health therapy, substance abuse treatment, laboratory tests, prescription drugs and medical transportation. Medicaid-enrolled children who are up-to-date on their well-child check-ups through 2 years of age are 48% less likely to experience an avoidable hospitalization. Children with incomplete care are 60% more likely to visit an emergency room compared to children who are up-to-date on their well-child care.

The bottom line is that increased federal support for state programs like Denali KidCare improves Alaska's ability to provide better health for more of Alaska's children. I urge you to pass this bill; furthermore, I would like to recommend that our legislators look into ideas such as regulating the services covered by Denali Kid Care, instituting co-pays and assets tests, and other ideas during the interim when there is adequate time for analyses and good discussions.

Sincerely,

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