



An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children (HB 1309/SB 762)
An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities
(HB 1310/SB 763)

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

Background

While 98.5% of children in Massachusetts have health coverage, over 30,000 children and young adults, including approximately 1,650 who have disabilities, can only access limited coverage through safety net programs. Immigration status is their only barrier to qualifying for comprehensive MassHealth coverage. California, Washington, Oregon, Illinois, New York, and Washington D.C. have expanded their Medicaid programs to cover all otherwise eligible children regardless of immigration status. Connecticut recently passed a similar measure.

Why is this legislation needed?

- The safety net programs currently available to certain immigrant children and young adults do not cover or have severe limits on important services, for example, no coverage for eyeglasses, in-home services, medical transportation, habilitation or rehabilitation services and caps on mental health visits, prescription drugs, and durable medical equipment.
- Inadequate coverage can lead to deferred care, worsening health conditions, and use of more costly health care interventions, such as emergency department care or longer hospital stays.
- Lack of access has broad implications: health care impacts school performance, lifelong health, and future earning potential.

Why is this a health equity issue?

- MassHealth covers many of the state's most underserved young people, but leaves out children and young adults who are undocumented or have certain other immigration statuses, even if they meet all other eligibility criteria.
- Lack of comprehensive coverage is especially harmful for young people with disabilities, complex health care needs, or chronic conditions. Untreated medical and/or behavioral health conditions impacts their ability to thrive at home, in school, and in the community.
- Inadequate coverage puts additional stress on families who already experience barriers to linguistically and culturally appropriate care; have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; and may face discrimination, trauma, and economic insecurity.

What does this legislation do?

- *An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children* (HB 1309/SB 762) expands comprehensive MassHealth coverage to *all* young people under age 21 whose only barrier to eligibility is immigration status.
- *An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities* (HB 1310/SB 763) expands MassHealth CommonHealth to undocumented children (through age 18) and low-income young adults (ages 19-20) with disabilities.

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