

**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 over 98% of children in Massachusetts have some form of health coverage, thousands of children and young adults with disabilities can only access safety net programs with very limited covered services. Immigration status is their only barrier to qualifying for MassHealth CommonHealth, a comprehensive health coverage program for individuals with disabilities or complex medical and/or behavioral health conditions. Expanding CommonHealth coverage to every young person with disabilities is one step towards covering all kids in the state.

Why is this legislation needed?

- The safety net programs currently available to children and young adults without a formal immigration status either do not cover or have severe limits on important services that people with disabilities need, such as caps on the number of mental health visits, severe limitations on durable medical equipment (e.g., wheelchairs) and prescription drugs, and no coverage for in-home services, habilitation (e.g. ABA therapy) or rehabilitation care.
- Inadequate coverage can lead to deferred care, worsening health conditions, increased trips to the emergency department, and/or longer hospital stays.
- Lack of access has broad implications: health care impacts school performance, state agency involvement (e.g. DYS), lifelong health, and future earning potential.

Why is this a health equity issue?

- Massachusetts provides comprehensive health coverage to children and young adults with low-incomes and/or disabilities, but leaves out undocumented immigrants, even if they meet all other eligibility factors.
- Lack of comprehensive coverage is especially important for young people who have disabilities, leaving them without all the support they need to thrive at home, in school, and in their communities.
- Inadequate coverage puts additional stress on families who already experience barriers to health care, including lack of access to linguistically and culturally appropriate care; have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; and may face trauma, discrimination and economic insecurity.

What does this legislation do?

- This bill would expand MassHealth CommonHealth to all children (under age 19) and very low-income young adults (ages 19-20) with disabilities who meet all current eligibility requirements except immigration status.
- HCFA also strongly supports *An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children* (HB1309/SB762) which would expand comprehensive MassHealth coverage to *all* young people under age 21 whose only barrier to eligibility is immigration status.

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