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SENATOR, 33RD SENATE DISTRICT



SB 1073 (Gonzalez) *Streamlining Services for Children and Pregnant Women Act*

SUMMARY

Senate Bill (SB) 1073 would increase access to health and nutrition services for eligible children and pregnant women by creating an automated system whereby eligibility data for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is used as criteria to assess eligibility for Medi-Cal and vice-versa. Additionally, SB 1073 would expedite access to Medi-Cal for young children and pregnant women already enrolled in WIC.

EXISTING LAW

Federal WIC and Medi-Cal Enrollment

Both WIC and Medi-Cal are already federally mandated to assist their enrollees in connecting to the other program. WIC income eligibility can be used to determine Medicaid enrollment and renewal via the federal Express Lane Eligibility option. Similarly, young children or pregnant women enrolled in Medi-Cal are legally “adjunctively eligible” for WIC, requiring only a nutritional assessment to finalize WIC enrollment.

Currently, 24 states have ongoing statewide enrollment pathways that share eligibility criteria between health and non-health programs.¹

In 2006, California passed SB-437 (*Escutia, Chapter 328, Statutes of 2006*) which required an automated gateway system be created between WIC and Healthy families (now part of Medi-Cal). However, this provision was never implemented.

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM

Medi-Cal and WIC are both aimed at supporting low-income pregnant women and young children, regardless of immigration status. However, many children and women who are eligible for both WIC and Medi-Cal are currently enrolled in only one program. An estimated

87,000 children and 11,000 pregnant women enrolled in WIC do not have Medi-Cal, despite their eligibility.² Likewise, over 512,000 Medi-Cal children are eligible for WIC but are not enrolled.³ Together, hundreds of thousands of expecting mothers and children who are eligible for vital health and nutrition services are not getting the support they are qualified to receive.

SOLUTION

SB 1073 will streamline the process of enrollment into WIC and Medi-Cal programs to eligible pregnant women and children by sharing eligibility data between the two programs and notifying those covered by one program of their eligibility for the other program. SB 1073 will also fast-track enrollment and services for children and pregnant women already enrolled in WIC into Medi-Cal.

SUPPORT

California WIC Association (Co-Sponsor)
Children's Partnership (Co-Sponsor)

CONTACT

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¹ <https://www.kff.org/report-section/medicaid-and-chip-eligibility-enrollment-and-cost-sharing-policies-as-of-january-2019-findings-from-a-50-state-survey-introduction/>

² California Department of Public Health data inquiry, September 2018.

³ California Department of Public Health correspondence sharing DHCS/CDPH data match.

⁴ <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/one-seven-adults-immigrant-families-reported-avoiding-public-benefit-programs-2018>

⁵ Public Charge and the Threat to Immigrant Families: Reducing the Chilling Effect on Medi-Cal Enrollment” UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and California for Immigrant Policy Center, 2019.