**Health Care Access & Social Determinants of Health**

Telemedicine improves care by giving patients the option of more convenient and timely access to both primary care providers and specialists. This bill would allow expanded access to telemedicine services in the Commonwealth by providing insurance coverage of telemedicine services in the same manner as in-person visits.

**S.613 An Act Relative to Continuity of Care for Families Enrolled in MassHealth - Sen. DiDomenico**
Often children in the MassHealth program cycle on and off of coverage. When this happens, they can lose access to their primary care provider (PCP) and get re-assigned. This bill would ensure that children maintain continuity with their PCP and that newborns, newly adopted, or foster children are assigned to the same PCP as their siblings.

This budget-neutral bill would improve benefits for children covered through the Children’s Medical Security Plan (CMSP). CMSP covers children who are not eligible for Medicaid, do not have access to insurance through their parents or guardians, and are not eligible for other public programs.

---

**Behavioral Health**

Requires commercial insurance carriers to provide coverage for wraparound services similar to those provided by the state through the Children’s Behavioral Health Initiative.

Proposed legislation would require insurers to meet reporting and transparency standards on provider networks, give the Division of Insurance recourse in the case of violating such requirements, and provide access to out-of-network care.

Establishes the position of Children’s Mental Health Ombudsman in the Office of the Child Advocate. The role of the ombudsman will be to monitor and ensure compliance with relevant child mental health statutes, regulations, rules, and policies and receive, investigate, and resolve complaints filed on behalf of a child.

---

**Public Health & Prevention**

**HB.2864 & S.1218 An Act to Protect Youth From the Health Risks of Tobacco and Nicotine Addiction - Rep. McMurtry & Sen. Lewis**
Lowering rates of youth tobacco use and nicotine addiction will save lives and reduce health care costs. This bill would raise the minimum legal age of purchase for all tobacco products to age 21, prohibit the sale of all tobacco products in health care institutions and require child-resistant packaging.

**S.1960 An Act Relative to Child Passenger Safety - Sen. Montigny**
Research show that the safest place in a car for young children is in the back seat. This bill helps to strengthen current MA laws by ensuring that all children under the age of 13 are safely seated in the rear passenger seats of motor vehicles unless there is no rear seat or it is otherwise occupied.

Cavities, which are largely preventable, can have a major impact on a child’s health and development as well as high costs for dental treatment throughout life. This bill would take a successful children’s oral health program that was developed by experts at Boston Children’s Hospital and replicate it on a larger scale, creating a cost-effective prevention program for children enrolled in MassHealth.
Child Health Advocacy Areas of Interest

In addition to the legislative agenda, Boston Children's Hospital's Government Relations team in partnership with The Office of Community Health works to address child health and well-being via regulatory and budget advocacy. Below is a sample list of other areas of our advocacy work.

**Health Care Access & Social Determinants of Health**

**Transportation to Appointments**
One of the greatest barriers to accessing health care as identified by our patients, their families and our providers is access to transportation. This can result in delays in accessing care and inappropriate use of ambulances, resulting in unnecessary costs for consumers and the health care system. We work on innovative technologies like telemedicine and regulations to improve access to non-emergency medical transportation services (NEMT) for pediatric patients and families.

**Preserving Coverage & Access for Kids**
In Massachusetts, 99% of all children currently have access to health insurance. Proposed federal health care reform, may have significant impact on the local gains made in children's health and well being. We will advocate to ensure that all children in the Commonwealth covered by Medicaid also known as MassHealth the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP) maintain their coverage, full access to all benefits and do not face increases in the cost of care.

**Homelessness**
Homelessness and unstable housing is a significant social determinant of health for kids and families. Homeless children are predisposed to worse health outcomes due to poor living conditions and food insecurity. Boston Children's Hospital will pursue opportunities to ensure that homeless families are not sleeping in places unfit for human habitation such as emergency rooms. We also work to develop screenings to prevent families from falling into homelessness via our Health Starts at Home Initiative.

For more information about health care access and social determinants of health advocacy, please contact the Director of State Government Relations Kate Audette: Kathryn.Audette@childrens.harvard.edu

**Behavioral Health**

**Psychiatric Emergency Department Boarding**
When patients present to the Emergency Department (ED) in need of acute, psychiatric care, they often experience long stays "boarding" in inappropriate settings before accessing appropriate care. Boston Children's Hospital is working with other leadership of the Children's Mental Health Campaign and state policymakers in the legislature and administration to create solutions that will improve quality and access.

**Access to Behavioral Health Care**
Families of youth with behavioral health concerns often have trouble finding the right providers when and where they need them. Boston Children's Hospital is working with other leadership of the Children's Mental Health Campaign and state policymakers in the legislature and administration on issues of workforce development, behavioral health integration into primary care, and early identification and treatment.

For more information about behavioral health advocacy, please contact Director of Behavioral Health Advocacy & Policy Kate Ginnis: Kate.Ginnis@childrens.harvard.edu

**Public Health & Prevention**

**Recreational Marijuana**
The recent passing of recreational marijuana in Massachusetts raises several concerns for the safety and well-being of children and adolescents. The Office of Government Relations works with community stakeholders across Massachusetts to assure that insure legislation and regulation protect the safety of young children and adolescents. Through the legislative session, top areas of concern will include: funding for the MA Poison Control Center, adolescent substance abuse prevention and education, and child proof packaging and marketing of edibles.

**Sugar Sweetened Beverages**
We support the multiple efforts underway this session that aim to reduce the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB's) by kids and adolescents. Research shows that SSB consumption by children has been linked to risks for obesity, diabetes, and other adverse health impacts. Boston Children's Hospital will be working in collaboration with legislators and advocates to innovative ways to reduce pediatric consumption and improve health outcomes.

For more information about public health and prevention advocacy, please contact Government Relations Specialist, Jamie Gaynes: Jamie.Gaynes@childrens.harvard.edu