



Provider Continuity is Vital to Children's Health

An Act Relative to Continuity of Care for Families Enrolled in MassHealth

S.613

Lead Sponsors: Senator DiDomenico

Background

When re-enrolling in MassHealth after falling off coverage, children are not always assigned to the same primary care provider. In these cases, when parents take their child to who they thought was their pediatrician, they learn that they are in the "wrong" place, requiring them to either be sent away or for the pediatrician to see the child without reimbursement. In addition, during a time of narrowing of networks children within the MassHealth Managed Care Organizations (MCO's) may abruptly lose access to their primary care provider when networks change, causing unnecessary disruptions in care.

Why is this legislation needed?

- MassHealth policy states that individuals re-enrolled within one year of losing coverage should be re-assigned to the same primary care provider. However, some pediatricians' experience indicates that this policy is not always followed.
- In the case of children who are otherwise healthy and are only seeing a pediatrician for an annual checkup, it is possible to exceed a one year gap in MassHealth coverage.
- MassHealth has no policy regarding newborn siblings, who are occasionally assigned to a different primary care provider than their older brothers and sisters.
- MassHealth MCO networks are fluctuating due market pressures. During times of network changes, MassHealth can and should ensure that children can maintain access to their primary care provider

An Act Relative to Continuity of Care for Families Enrolled in MassHealth requires MassHealth to re-assign any child who regains eligibility within an 18 month period to the same health care provider he or she had been assigned to previously, and assigns newborn children to the same primary care provider as the next oldest sibling. Finally, the bill requires MassHealth to ensure that children have access to the same primary care provider when their MCO networks change.