

Keep Coloradans Covered

Support HB23-1300; JBC Bill

Sponsors: Reps. Sirota/Bird, Bockenfeld & Sens. Kirkmeyer/Zenzinger, Bridges

Colorado has been a national leader in maintaining health insurance coverage for eligible kids and families throughout the pandemic: It was one of five states that saw the largest gains in kids' health insurance coverage between 2019-21. During the Public Health Emergency, longer periods of continuous coverage in our public health programs allowed more Coloradans to access and maintain health insurance. This was especially important for children – the demographic most at risk of losing coverage due to administrative paperwork issues and processes – and other under-resourced populations such as those leaving prison, for whom continuous coverage has been shown to improve health and reduce recidivism.

Now, federal policies supporting continuous eligibility in public health coverage have come to an end, which could lead the number of people without health coverage to soar. This **bipartisan** bill will allow Colorado to provide longer periods of continuous Medicaid and Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+) coverage to improve Coloradans' health, financial security, and access to care.

Extending Medicaid and CHP+ coverage for young kids and people leaving carceral settings will:

Improve health, well-being and access to health services during critical life periods

- Continuous coverage reduces family stress and increases use of preventive services.
- Children need consistent access to health care, especially in their early years when frequent screenings, vaccinations, and check-ups are critical to their development and school readiness. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children have 13 well-child visits by the time they turn three.
- Continuous coverage increases the use of important preventive oral health services among children, and among children with special health care needs, continuous coverage is associated with increased use of preventive and specialty medical care.
- Young children experience six to nine, short-term illnesses per year that can require a health care visit and treatment.
- After losing and then regaining Medicaid coverage, adult Medicaid beneficiaries are more than twice as likely to be hospitalized for conditions that could have been treated in a primary care or outpatient setting. Adults who have multiple transitions in and out of Medicaid refill their prescriptions less often and have higher emergency room utilization, more office visits, and more hospitalizations.
- People leaving incarceration have higher rates of chronic health conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and behavioral health disorders, than other adults. Continuous coverage helps people leaving carceral settings access the care they need.

Reduce administrative burdens across the health system

- Keeping adults and children enrolled reduces administrative work for the Medicaid Department and CHP+ carriers.
- Keeping people covered reduces provider workload, as fewer enrollees need assistance re-applying for coverage and fewer appointments need to be canceled due to coverage loss. It also increases the accuracy of patient panels and payments to providers by ensuring that patients remain assigned to their providers.

Strengthen Colorado's Medicaid program in alignment with changes made in other states while drawing down millions in federal funds to Colorado

- State waivers to improve coverage of kids and other critical populations have already been approved and more than a half dozen other states are pursuing similar policies.
- This proposal would result in millions of federal funds flowing into Colorado for increased insurance coverage. It will have substantial spillover benefits, allowing Colorado to draw down more federal funding for the WIC program and the school lunch program.

HB23-1300 will:

Require the Medicaid Department to submit a waiver application to the federal government that extends continuous Medicaid and CHIP coverage:

- Continuously for young children ages 0-3 years old; and
- For 12 continuous months for individuals being released from prison after serving their sentence.

Establish a stakeholder-informed study to determine how best to expand on the initial waiver application to meet more health needs of Coloradans. The study will require that the state determine how best to use a Medicaid waiver to:

- Meet health-related social needs – including housing and food security; and
- Expand continuous eligibility policies to cover more kids, justice-involved people, people experiencing homelessness, and adults in very low income households.



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