

1999 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 659

Expressing the sense of the General Assembly concerning Virginia's implementation of the children's health insurance program.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 9, 1999

Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 1999

WHEREAS, in 1997 Congress approved the new Title XXI of the Social Security Act, establishing authority for states to implement children's health insurance plans for low-income families and providing an enhanced federal funding match for such programs; and

WHEREAS, states were authorized to implement this program as (i) an expansion of Medicaid, (ii) an insurance program with copayments and premiums for children who are not eligible for Medicaid and which covers the same or similar services as the relevant state employees' health benefit plan, or (iii) a combination thereof; and

WHEREAS, during the 1998 Session of the General Assembly, several bills were introduced to provide for the components of this program in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, unfortunately, significant controversy developed concerning the various choices in policy, that is, whether Medicaid should be expanded or a straight insurance program be implemented; and

WHEREAS, although agreement on the components of this program was never reached, all policy makers were in agreement that the Commonwealth must provide health insurance to low-income children; and

WHEREAS, a plan was submitted to the federal Health Care Financing Administration, was approved by the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, and is being implemented by the Department of Medical Assistance Services at this time; and

WHEREAS, this plan provides for an insurance program with benefits consistent with the Virginia Plan for Medical Assistance Services; and

WHEREAS, one of the issues in the 1998 debate related to the federal exclusion of state and local government employees' participation in a straight insurance program; and

WHEREAS, as Virginia's program began implementation over the last several months, the members of the General Assembly have heard from low-income parents who are employed by the state or a local government and cannot afford to pay for the relevant employees' health insurance program; and

WHEREAS, these parents are hard-working Virginians, some of them holding down two jobs, who are working to provide their children with a better life than they themselves are experiencing; and

WHEREAS, some of these parents have children with special health needs and are desperate to find an affordable way to purchase health insurance; and

WHEREAS, when these parents applied for the children's health insurance program for their children, they were informed that their children are not eligible because of their parents' employment with a state or local agency; and

WHEREAS, upon learning of their children being ineligible for this health insurance program because of their parents' employment, these parents have been confused and dismayed, asking why this distinction was made and what can be done to remedy this situation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Governor and the Department of Medical Assistance Services be urged to implement the children's health insurance program in such a way as to provide eligibility for local government low-income employees and the Commonwealth's low-income employees with children; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That no state or local government employee be a second-class citizen in this Commonwealth and that every child of a low-income state or local employee have the same opportunity as children in other low-income families to receive adequate and necessary health care; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution to the Governor, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, and the Director of the Department of Medical Assistance Services in order that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly in this matter.

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