

MassHealth Coverage for Immigrant Children Called “Equity Issue”

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State House News Service

More than 30,000 children and young adults in Massachusetts, including 1,650 with disabilities, are ineligible for comprehensive MassHealth coverage because of their immigration status, according to an advocacy group that backs a pair of bills aiming to extend coverage to that population.

Health Care for All is calling for lawmakers to pass a bill (H 1309, S 762) to expand comprehensive MassHealth coverage to all people under age 21 whose only eligibility barrier is their immigration status. Another bill (H 1310, S 763) would expand MassHealth’s CommonHealth plan to undocumented children and low-income young adults with disabilities.

“This is a health equity issue – immigrants face disproportionate barriers to care, and a lack of access to quality health care has been proven to have long-term negative impacts on children’s overall physical, cognitive and behavioral wellbeing,” Suzanne Curry, Health Care for All’s behavioral health policy director, said in a statement. “Especially in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Massachusetts legislature must pass the Cover All Kids bills this session.”

Both bills are sponsored by Sen. Sal DiDomenico and Rep. Dave Rogers and came before the Health Care Financing Committee for a hearing Tuesday. The sponsors said California, Washington, Oregon, Illinois and New York have taken similar steps. DiDomenico told the committee that a lack of accessible health care during childhood can have implications into adulthood,

including a greater likelihood of developing chronic conditions and a reduced likelihood of performing well in school. "Both bills will break this cycle by knocking down barriers and expanding comprehensive health coverage to immigrant children and young adults living in the commonwealth," he said.