



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Samra G. Brouk

## Brouk, Advocates Call for Continued Health Insurance Coverage for Children Ages 0-6

SAMRA G. BROUK January 5, 2024

| ISSUE: **CHILD HEALTH PLUS, CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



**ROCHESTER, NY** - Senator Samra Brouk was joined by Assemblymember Sarah Clark and local advocates on Friday morning to call on Governor Hochul to include the Senator's legislation ([S7747](#)) to provide continued coverage to children ages 0-6 in her upcoming Executive Budget Proposal.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of children would be disenrolled from healthcare coverage due to administrative issues or a slight change in their family's income. During the height of the pandemic, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) responded by declaring a federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19 under Section 319 of the Public Health Service (PHS) Act, which allowed for automatic continuous healthcare enrollment. While this declaration expired in May of 2023, it became clear that the automatic enrollment of children in public health coverage had immense benefits for families across the state.

New York is not alone in this effort. Several states have submitted waiver applications asking for the federal government to allow children who qualify for Medicaid and Child Health Plus to stay enrolled until the age of six, with Oregon receiving approval and Washington and New Mexico currently awaiting approval.

Nearly 50% of the almost 90 million people on Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are children. According to Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, the share of uninsured children dropped by approximately 55% as a direct result of the national declaration. To that end, The Commonwealth Fund has found that gaps in coverage can also result in financial hardship—even if just one family member is uninsured. Finally, providing children with ongoing coverage leads to greater coverage rates which are associated with better health, reduces school absenteeism, and higher academic achievement for children and, potentially, fewer lost work days and lower medical debt for their parents.

Brouk's [legislation](#) would allow New York State to provide children with health care from birth to age six on a continuous basis regardless of changes in their household's income and provides flexibility to do so via Medicaid or CHIP.

Recently, it was reported that **400,000 New Yorkers lost coverage** due to paperwork issues associated with the reenrollment process. This is a problem experienced by other states across the country, with eight states having introduced legislation to provide continual coverage to children. Medicaid and Child Health Plus cover nearly half of New York children and are federal programs funded by federal, state, and local dollars.

According to **Georgetown University**, even a short gap in coverage can result in a child not receiving necessary care for conditions like asthma, which can result in emergency room visits and missed school days. The call for this legislation comes amid the New York State Department of Health indicating that **influenza is prevalent** in the state, and reporting that **respiratory illnesses like RSV** are on the rise in the Greater Rochester Area.

**S7747** (BROUK) is currently in the Senate Rules Committee.

“Any time a child cannot access the medical care they need, we must reflect on the policy failures that are getting in the way. This legislation is an important part of New York’s overall strategy to support working families,” **said Senator Samra Brouk**. “Young children in New York State deserve uninterrupted access to the preventive and primary care they need to thrive. We have a moral obligation to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to set our children up for healthy, successful futures, and I encourage the Governor and my colleagues in the legislature to prioritize this legislation as we head into budget negotiations.”

“The earliest years of a child’s life can be the most challenging for parents but also the most vital for development,” **said Assemblymember Sarah Clark**. “Allowing children to keep their health coverage through the age of six can help ease the burden on families and prepare them for a life of academic and social success, good health, and fewer sick days.”

“The early years of life are critical for healthy child development, and all children deserve dependable health coverage,” **said Jill Halterman, MD, MPH, physician-in-chief of Golisano Children’s Hospital.** “Research shows that a number of issues – including developmental delays, lead poisoning, and behavioral health challenges just to name a few – can be identified and successfully addressed at an early age. This bill will help secure the long-term health of children by providing consistent access to needed healthcare from birth to age 6.”

“The Whole Child Initiative seeks to improve health, education, and human service outcomes for children and their families from pre-pregnancy through the 3rd grade,” **said Toyin Anderson, Parent/Family Partner, Whole Child Initiative, ROC the Future Alliance.** “If we want healthy children in New York, then we must have continuous health insurance to achieve this.”

“Access to healthcare is a human right,” **said Nahmese Bacot, Parent/Family Partner, Whole Child Initiative, ROC the Future Alliance.** “Our children deserve to be covered. The time is now to invest and support the health and wellbeing of all children.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2023-S7747

- 
- Introduced
  - - In Committee Assembly
    - In Committee Senate

- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Provides public health insurance coverage for children who are eligible for such coverage under the age of six to continue until they reach the age of six

November 13, 2023

In Senate Committee **Health**

Sponsored by **Samra G. Brouk**

Do you support this bill?