



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Protecting Our Children's Health & Nutrition

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

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Senate Passes Child Health Plus and School Meals Enrollment Coordination Act

Today, the Senate passed legislation (S4057B) introduced by Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, to preserve good health and nutrition as part of early childhood development and establish the Child Health Plus and School Meals Enrollment Coordination Act of 2011.

Health and nutrition are directly correlated to a child's success in school, and later achievement as an adult.

The bill passed 34-26, with all "no" votes cast by Senate Republicans.

The Child Health Plus and School Meals Enrollment Coordination Act of 2011 simply requires coordination between Child Health Plus, Medicaid, and School Meals programs to ensure that children who are eligible and enrolled for free and reduced price school meals are also enrolled in Child Health Plus or Medicaid to ensure they have ready access to health care.

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D/WF-35th District) said, “Good health and good nutrition are the fundamentals for laying a strong foundation in early childhood development and success in school. I remain committed to building a government that provides more to its people at a lower cost to our taxpayers. I introduced the Child Health Plus and School Meals Enrollment Coordination Act to increase the information being shared to streamline services, ensuring that eligible children receive necessary medical care, and that no child goes hungry. If signed into law, this legislation will make both our State more efficient as well as help the quarter million children in New York that are not insured to obtain the resources necessary for healthy young lives.”

Senate Majority Conference Leader John L. Sampson said, “New York has been a leader in providing health care to its children. This is an important step towards making sure all children from families who may not have the means for health care never have to worry about coverage.”

Senator Velmanette Montgomery (D-Brooklyn), Chair of the Senate Committee on Children and Families said, “Good health and good nutrition go hand-in-hand, and that's why it is so important to improve coordination between the State's Child Health Plus, Medicaid and School Meals programs.

This bill helps removes barriers to health care access for children throughout the state by making it possible for those who qualify for free or reduced lunch to be automatically enrolled in CHP or Medicaid.”

Senator Neil Breslin (D- Albany), Chair of the Senate Insurance Committee said, “I am pleased to support Senator Stewart-Cousins in passing this bill. So many of New York’s children are missing out on the benefits of a great program like Child Health Plus, which would give them access to much-needed screenings, diagnosis, and treatment of conditions that other insured children get in primary care settings. Allowing more children to get health care coverage through enrollment in school lunch programs is a smart and efficient way to diminish the rate of uninsured

children in our state.”

New York State has shown a long-standing commitment to providing for the health care and nutrition of its residents and is a national leader in health care innovation. The Child Health Plus Insurance Program and the School Lunch Program are a couple of those successful innovations.

However, despite the successful history of Child Health Plus, hundreds of thousands of children are not reaping the benefits of this vital public health program. About 250,000 children in New York State are uninsured, with approximately 220,000 of those children eligible for, but not participating in, Medicaid or Child Health Plus. This bill helps the State give those children access to health care coverage through Child Health Plus and Medicaid. Since the majority of children who are eligible for but not participating in Child Health Plus are attending school, having the Free and Reduced Price School Meals Program and Child Health Plus work together allows children who are in school lunch programs to also receive access to Child Health Plus.

Access to health care is critically important to young children. Poor, uninsured children face many serious risks because leaving treatable and preventable conditions undiagnosed can have lifelong harmful effects on their functioning and opportunities. Deferred or neglected care also cuts children off from the routine health care provided in primary care settings that includes child-specific, age-appropriate screening, diagnosis, and treatment of both chronic and acute conditions. A third of uninsured children in New York go without any medical treatment for the entire year in a society where 88% of insured children receive care in the same time span.

This legislation is an important step to create access to health care for uninsured children, but it greatly benefits minority children in particular. In New York State, uninsured Hispanic children are 10 times more likely than insured Hispanic children to miss out on the medical care they need, while uninsured African-American children are 20 times more likely to miss out on necessary medical care than insured African-American children.