



PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH PUBLIC POLICY

July 25, 2023

The Honorable John Lawn, Chair
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
State House, Room 236
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Cindy Friedman, Chair
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
State House, Room 313
Boston, MA 02133

Submitted by email

Re: Testimony in support of *An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children (H. 1237/S. 740)*

Dear Chair Lawn, Chair Friedman and Members of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of *An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children (H.1237/S.740)*, “Cover All Kids.” This bill expands full MassHealth coverage to children and young adults whose only barrier to eligibility is immigration status. Cover All Kids helps advance the Commonwealth’s goals of promoting health equity and moving towards universal coverage for children.

The Children’s League of Massachusetts (CLM) is a statewide non-profit association of almost 60 private and public organizations that collectively advocate for the availability, accessibility, and quality of services that are in the best interest of the Commonwealth’s children, youth, and families.

Massachusetts is a leader in access to health care for children. Yet, many immigrant families are still left behind. Tens of thousands of children and young adults, including children with disabilities, cannot get the health care they need simply because of their immigration status. Most of these young people have access to a patchwork of safety net programs, such as the Children’s Medical Security Plan, Health Safety Net, and/or MassHealth Limited. These programs are confusing for families and providers to navigate, and they have strict limits on covered benefits. Many important services are not covered at all.

Limited health care puts additional stress on families who already face health disparities and barriers to linguistically and culturally appropriate care. These are many of the same families who have been disproportionately impacted by the health and economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inadequate coverage leads to inconsistent care and worse health outcomes for children, impacting their ability to thrive at home, in school and in the community. It also impacts the health and wellbeing of the entire family. Major coverage gaps can also result in the use of more expensive care through emergency departments and longer hospital stays.

An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children (H.1237/S.740) would help address many of these issues by removing immigration status as a barrier to MassHealth coverage for children and young adults in the Commonwealth. Twelve other states have already passed similar policies. Massachusetts and New Hampshire are the only remaining New England states that restrict Medicaid eligibility based on immigration status for children of all ages. It is time for Massachusetts to cover all kids.



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We respectfully ask you to support and favorably report *An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children* (H.1237/S.740) from your committee. Please do not hesitate to contact me CLM's Policy Director Sue A. O'Callaghan at sue@childrensleague.org Suzanne Curry from Health Care For All at scurry@hcfama.org with questions or to discuss this important issue further. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Gwaltney".

Rachel Gwaltney
Executive Director
Children's League of Massachusetts

Cc: Members, Joint Committee on Health Care Financing