

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 10, 2007

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2007—08 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 13**

---

---

**Introduced by Assembly Member Laird**

December 4, 2006

---

---

~~An act relating to health care coverage.~~ *An act relating to maternal dental care.*

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 13, as amended, Laird. ~~Health care coverage.~~ *Maternal dental care.*

*Existing law requires the State Department of Health Services to maintain a program of maternal and child health and to develop or obtain a brochure to educate pregnant women and new parents about the important role of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and preventing chronic diseases. Effective July 1, 2007, these duties will transfer to the State Department of Public Health.*

*This bill would request the Regents of the University of California to, among other things, host a one-day conference to bring together approximately 30 academic experts, medical and dental practice experts, policy experts, and community leaders to develop a consensus on best practices or standards of care for the dental treatment of pregnant women. The bill would also request the Regents of the University of California to present the guidelines and recommendations that emerge from the one-day conference at a larger one-day workshop.*

~~Existing law establishes various public programs to provide health care coverage to eligible children, including the Medi-Cal program administered by the State Department of Health Care Services and county welfare agencies, and the Healthy Families Program administered~~

by the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board. Children through 18 years of age are eligible for health care coverage under these programs if they meet certain household income and other requirements.

~~This bill would state findings and declarations of the Legislature regarding health care coverage for children in California.~~

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: ~~no~~yes. State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1     SECTION 1. *The Legislature finds and declares all of the*  
 2 *following:*

3     (a) *There continues to be considerable confusion among both*  
 4 *medical and dental professionals regarding the time periods when*  
 5 *pregnant women should receive dental care. Both medical and*  
 6 *dental providers regularly raise questions about this. A*  
 7 *comprehensive Internet search of otherwise credible Web sites*  
 8 *yields conflicting information. Recommendations often are derived*  
 9 *from anecdotal evidence. There still seems to be an accepted*  
 10 *notion, unsupported by the scientific literature, that dental*  
 11 *treatment for the pregnant mother is safe only during the second*  
 12 *trimester. This confusion on the part of the medical, dental, and*  
 13 *lay community results in a barrier to the timely receipt of critically*  
 14 *important care.*

15     (b) *Pregnancy and early childhood are particularly important*  
 16 *times to access oral health care because the consequences of poor*  
 17 *oral health can have a lifelong impact. There is increasing evidence*  
 18 *suggesting a link between periodontal disease and low-birth weight*  
 19 *deliveries. Pregnant women with gum disease may be as much as*  
 20 *seven times more likely to have a baby born too early or too small.*  
 21 *Preterm births account for 35 percent of all health care spending*  
 22 *in the United States for infants and 10 percent of all health care*  
 23 *spending for children. Preterm births are responsible for*  
 24 *three-quarters of neonatal mortality and one-half of long-term*  
 25 *neurological impairments in children. These numbers have changed*  
 26 *little over the past 40 years.*

27     (c) *In addition to the consequences of a premature birth, the*  
 28 *presence of decay causing bacteria in the mother has been shown*  
 29 *to be the source of dental caries or tooth decay in the infant and*  
 30 *toddler. Dental caries are the most prevalent chronic infectious*

1 *disease in children. A review of the literature shows that there are*  
2 *several critical events in the causation of caries in young children.*  
3 *One pivotal event is the acquisition of the infection with*  
4 *streptococcus mutans, the bacteria most responsible for the*  
5 *initiation of caries.*

6 *(d) It is the intent of the Legislature to address this barrier to*  
7 *help ensure the health of pregnant women and reduce the risk of*  
8 *adverse birth outcomes and disease in newborns.*

9 *SEC. 2. The Legislature hereby requests the Regents of the*  
10 *University of California to do both of the following:*

11 *(a) Host a one-day conference to bring together approximately*  
12 *30 academic experts, medical and dental practice experts, policy*  
13 *experts, and community leaders to develop a consensus on best*  
14 *practices or standards of care for the dental treatment of pregnant*  
15 *women. It is the intent of the Legislature for this consensus to be*  
16 *based upon an examination and evaluation of the latest research*  
17 *from experts in the field, and a discussion of the standard's*  
18 *implications for clinical practice through a comprehensive process.*  
19 *It is the intent of the Legislature for this conference to include an*  
20 *experienced facilitator and nationally recognized experts who are*  
21 *familiar with current research and who will share that information*  
22 *with conference participants. It is also the intent of the Legislature*  
23 *for this consensus to set the stage for programmatic and policy*  
24 *changes in this state.*

25 *(b) Present the guidelines and recommendations that emerge*  
26 *from the one-day conference at a larger one-day workshop that*  
27 *includes the leadership of medical and dental organizations and*  
28 *associations and representatives from the California First 5*  
29 *Commission, maternal and child health agencies and advocates,*  
30 *managed care plans, primary care associations, medical and dental*  
31 *schools, comprehensive perinatal services, and relevant*  
32 *governmental agencies. It is the intent of the Legislature for the*  
33 *workshop faculty to include nationally recognized experts. It is*  
34 *also the intent of the Legislature for this workshop to provide an*  
35 *opportunity to inform and educate approximately 130 leaders in*  
36 *medicine, dentistry, and academia who interface with pregnant*  
37 *women and provide education as well as treatment in a variety of*  
38 *settings. The product of these events would be published*  
39 *recommendations on providing dental care to pregnant women.*

1 (c) Disseminate the recommendations and craft suitable  
2 guidelines on how to inform and educate medical and dental  
3 providers on the best practices and standards of care for the dental  
4 treatment of pregnant women.

5 SECTION 1. ~~The Legislature finds and declares all of the~~  
6 ~~following:~~

7 ~~(a) Health care coverage is a critical investment in the health~~  
8 ~~of California's children for the following reasons:~~

9 ~~(1) Children with health care coverage are more likely to get~~  
10 ~~the care they need, especially essential preventive care that can~~  
11 ~~prevent avoidable conditions and expensive emergency room visits.~~

12 ~~(2) Children with health care coverage are healthier and perform~~  
13 ~~better in school. California's investment in children's health care~~  
14 ~~coverage has been successful. For example, children enrolled in~~  
15 ~~the Healthy Families Program have shown a 63-percent~~  
16 ~~improvement in health and a 64-percent improvement in their~~  
17 ~~ability to "pay attention" and to "keep up with school activities."~~

18 ~~(b) California's investment in state health care coverage for~~  
19 ~~children has significantly reduced the number of children who~~  
20 ~~have no health care coverage.~~

21 ~~(c) With about 800,000 children in California without health~~  
22 ~~care coverage, the goal of extending coverage to all children in~~  
23 ~~the state is within reach, especially since a majority (58 percent)~~  
24 ~~of them already qualify for state health care coverage through the~~  
25 ~~Medi-Cal program or the Healthy Families Program.~~

26 ~~(d) California can no longer afford to waste precious resources~~  
27 ~~by dropping children from coverage unnecessarily due to~~  
28 ~~bureaucratic red tape, only to reenroll them at a later date. If this~~  
29 ~~phenomenon of children losing coverage temporarily were~~  
30 ~~addressed, the number of low-income children without health care~~  
31 ~~coverage nationally would be reduced by 40 percent.~~

32 ~~(e) Appropriate technological solutions can help improve~~  
33 ~~program administration and efficiency while reducing barriers to~~  
34 ~~coverage for children, making it easier for children to get and keep~~  
35 ~~the health care coverage they need.~~

36 ~~(f) With existing enrollment successes like the local Children's~~  
37 ~~Health Initiative, express lane eligibility through school lunch~~  
38 ~~programs, and Newborn Hospital Gateways, any reforms designed~~  
39 ~~to reach all children must build and improve upon the Medi-Cal~~  
40 ~~program and the Healthy Families Program, local enrollment and~~

1 retention innovations, and available technologies to enroll more  
2 children.

3 (g) Across the state, over 27 coalitions of local health plans,  
4 community leaders, health providers, businesses, unions, county  
5 agencies, First 5 Commissions, faith leaders, schools, and others  
6 are at work to expand access to health care coverage for children,  
7 resulting in exceptional models for what is needed statewide.

8 (h) California voters overwhelmingly support a plan that would  
9 ensure that every child in California has health care coverage. Even  
10 when voters understand the financial cost required to cover all  
11 children, this support is solid throughout the state and across  
12 partisan lines.

13 (i) The Legislature aims to ensure that every child in California  
14 can get health care coverage to grow up healthy and strong.