

Director's Log

February 13, 2006

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2. Its official: AAP-CA Endorses "Preschool for All" (Prop 82)
3. AAP-CA supports improved vision screening (AB 1842)

1. ACTION NEEDED TODAY: MEDI-CAL REIMBURSEMENT (SB 912)

AAP-CA has joined a broad coalition led by CMA to reverse the 5% cut to fee-for-service Medi-Cal physician reimbursement. This coalition was successful in blocking implementation of these cuts for several years. However, recent court action has cleared the way for the cuts to go into effect. SB 912, a bill to block the cuts, has passed through the Senate and will be heard in Assembly Health Committee tomorrow. It is on a fast track, and we are hoping to have enough votes on the floor to make it veto-proof. TWO ACTIONS are needed now to help ensure the enactment of SB 912 and to prevent further erosion to access to care for children in Medi-Cal:

A. CONTACT YOUR ASSEMBLYMEMBER

TODAY Monday 2-13 and TOMORROW Tuesday 2-14

Call (best), fax or email your Assemblymember and urge them to support SB 912.

(A sample letter is attached, which you may cut/paste and personalize to put into email or fax.)

We will get it out of Assembly Health. Every vote we get on the Assembly Floor will matter. IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT THAT REPUBLICAN ASSEMBLYMEMBERS BE CONTACTED.

To find out who your assemblymember is, go to

<http://192.234.213.69/amapsearch/framepage.asp>

(Ignore the map—scroll down to the place to enter your address.)

B. CONTACT THE GOVERNOR

TODAY THROUGH THE END OF THE WEEK

Call or fax the Governor and urge him to sign SB 912 when it comes to his desk.

The Governor can be CALLED at 916-445-2841 or FAXED at 916-445-4633.

2. AAP-CA ENDORSES PRESCHOOL FOR ALL INITIATIVE

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), a joint venture of the four AAP-CA regional Chapters, has voted to endorse Proposition 82, the "Preschool for All Act" initiative that will be on the state's June primary election ballot.

The Preschool for All Act would pay for a year of preschool for all 4-year-olds by increasing income taxes by 1.7 percent for individuals who earn at least \$400,000 a year, or couples earning at least \$800,000. The taxes would produce an estimated \$2.4 billion a year for the program, which also would increase training and pay for preschool teachers. Parents would pick which preschool their children would attend, although

attendance wouldn't be mandatory. The program would be administered through county departments of education.

Although the AAP-CA would prefer to see policy issues worked out in the legislative arena, the clear need to address the social and developmental needs of young children and to increase training, pay and quality in early education led the AAP-CA to support this initiative effort by giving its endorsement. (Please note that no District financial resources will be used to promote the initiative.) By giving its endorsement the AAP-CA joins Children Now, First Five California, The CA Association for the Education of Young Children, the CA Council of Churches, Parent Voices, the NAACP, the National Council of La Raza and many other organizations committed to equal opportunity and access to young children and families to the quality services that will support them in being healthy and ready to learn.

For more information about the coalition in support of Prop 82, please go to <http://www.preschoolforallca.com/about.php>

3. AAP-CA SUPPORTS IMPROVED VISION SCREENING: AB 1842

For several years AAP-CA has spent precious time and resources fighting “vision screening” bills that have attempted to mandate referrals and “treatment” that are inconsistent with AAP guidelines. In particular, a subset of optometrists has been working to require so-called “vision tracking” assessments and referrals to optometrists to try to address learning disabilities. AAP policy finds no credible evidence to support such a mandate.

Given the continued attention to the need to close gaps in vision screening, the California Academy of Ophthalmology requested input from AAP-CA to develop a bill that would strengthen vision screening in a manner that is consistent with AAP guidelines and policy. The result is AAP-CA-supported AB 1842 (Coto) which builds upon the Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) program’s health screening requirements. AB 1842 would recommend that screenings be performed in a manner consistent with AAP guidelines, and would require a referral to an eye care professional (optometrist or ophthalmologist) ONLY after the child has failed the vision screening exam.

This bill is likely to be heard in its first committee next month. I will keep you alerted to opportunities for action in support.

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