

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 32

BY SENATOR CHEEK

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To request the Department of Health and Hospitals to study whether to amend Louisiana's State Medicaid Plan to permit physicians to apply fluoride varnish to the teeth of children under the age of seven who are enrolled in the state Medicaid program and receive appropriate reimbursement, to determine the feasibility of providing such reimbursement, to estimate the costs of such a program, and to submit a written report of its findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for legislation and appropriations relative to the issue, to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and the House Committee on Health and Welfare by February 1, 2012.

WHEREAS, tooth decay (dental caries) is the most common chronic childhood disease; and

WHEREAS, tooth decay is an almost completely preventable disease; and

WHEREAS, early childhood dental caries signal a serious threat to the current and future health and school success of Louisiana's youngest children; and

WHEREAS, sixty-six percent of Louisiana's third grade children have already experienced at least one cavity in their lifetime according to the Bright Smiles for Bright Futures Basic Screening Survey conducted by the Department of Health and Hospitals' Oral Health Program; and

WHEREAS, strong evidence and the experience of other states have shown that the application of fluoride varnish is a safe and effective strategy to significantly reduce the incidence of cavities among high-risk young children; and

WHEREAS, respected professional organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dental Association, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, and the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, have endorsed the

use of fluoride varnish for individuals at moderate to high risk for tooth decay in order to reduce lifetime dental caries experience; and

WHEREAS, many Louisiana children have limited access to dental care, as evidenced by the facts that just thirty-eight percent of eligible children served by Medicaid in State Fiscal Year 2010 received dental care over the course of the year and fifty-six of Louisiana's sixty-four parishes are considered to be dental health professional shortage areas; and

WHEREAS, young children are far more likely to visit a medical provider than a dentist, as evidenced by the fact that in 2007, forty-nine percent of Louisiana children five years of age and younger had not received preventive dental care visits in the previous year, but just seven percent of children under the age of five had not received preventive medical care; and

WHEREAS, only twenty-eight percent of Louisiana's population has access to fluoridated water, ranking Louisiana forty-seventh among the states in a recent analysis conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's low rate of fluoridation of community water supplies creates an even greater need for fluoride varnish to protect the teeth of young children; and

WHEREAS, the costs of repairing tooth decay and subsequent maintenance of repairs throughout life could be reduced significantly through fluoride varnish application at the earliest ages; and

WHEREAS, pediatricians and family physicians who see and follow children from birth are ideally positioned to positively impact the oral health of our youngest children by applying fluoride varnish, by educating parents on the elements of good oral hygiene in the earliest years, and by referring young children to dentists; and

WHEREAS, forty-three other states have approved Medicaid reimbursement for medical providers to apply fluoride varnish; and

WHEREAS, states have projected net savings for their Medicaid programs as a result of their fluoride varnish programs; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana can best seek to save money and improve health through prevention wherever possible; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Louisiana Dental Association, the Louisiana State Medical Society, the Louisiana Oral Health Coalition, and Agenda for Children support the implementation of a program to reimburse medical providers for the application of fluoride varnish to the teeth of children under the age of seven through the state's Medicaid program.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Health and Hospitals to study whether to amend Louisiana's State Medicaid Plan to provide Medicaid reimbursement to medical providers for the application of fluoride varnish to the teeth of children under the age of seven who are enrolled in the state Medicaid program, to determine the feasibility of providing such reimbursement, to estimate the costs of such a program, and to submit a written report of its findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for legislation and appropriations relative to the issue, to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and the House Committee on Health and Welfare by February 1, 2012.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals and to the Louisiana Oral Health Coalition.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES