



AB 422, SCHOOL LUNCH HEALTH NOTICE

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ADRIN NAZARIAN

Background:

Current law authorizes school districts to provide families with notifications on the availability of free and reduced-priced meal programs. These notifications also inform parents about the availability of low cost health care coverage for children, through Medi-Cal.

AB 59 by former-Senator Gil Cedillo (Chapter 894, Statute of 2001) authorized expedited eligibility of Medi-Cal coverage to children and parents participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). A recent study, by the Commonwealth Fund, found that 71% of uninsured children live in families that participate in one or more nutrition assistance programs, with the NSLP serving 59% of uninsured children.

Passage of the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010 offers individuals and families additional health care coverage options, including expanded Medi-Cal coverage and tax subsidies through the Health Benefit Exchange.

This bill:

AB 422 simply requires school districts to update the school lunch program to reflect the new healthcare coverage options available, as a result of the ACA. Specifically, this bill requires the school lunch program form to include information on the new California Health Benefit Exchange and the continued availability of Medi-Cal.

Purpose:

Today, millions of Californians lack healthcare coverage. The ACA provides the opportunity to expand health care coverage to millions of Californians either through expansions of the Medicaid program or subsidies to purchase health insurance through the new marketplace, called Covered California.

The successful implementation of the ACA will rely heavily on increasing public awareness. Although children and families may be eligible for these new coverage options, many parents are unaware of health coverage options. It is estimated that two out of three uninsured children are currently eligible for public health coverage

programs but are not enrolled (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research).

The California Simulation of Insurance Markets (CalSIM), by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the UC Berkeley Labor Center, estimates that between 1.2 and 1.6 million adults will be eligible for coverage under the new Medi-Cal expansion. An additional 1.8 to 2.1 million adults will be eligible for tax credits to purchase health insurance through California's new insurance marketplace.

Furthermore, health problems are more likely to escalate, due to the lack of health insurance, consequently affecting a child's ability to learn and parents' ability to work. According to the Children's Partnership, 63% of California children who newly enroll in a health care coverage program demonstrate improvements in academic performance and pay closer attention in class.

In order to minimize health problems arising from a lack of health coverage, AB 422 requires school districts to disseminate information regarding the availability of health care options, in tandem with free and reduced-price lunch notifications.

Support:

California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (Co-Sponsor)
St. John's Well Child & Family Center (Co-Sponsor)

Opposition:

None on file

Staff Contact:

Mariana Sabeniano
916.319.2046
Mariana.Sabeniano@asm.ca.gov