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More than 29,000 working poor in Black Caucus districts could benefit from Family Care

Lawmakers urged to include health insurance measure during budget negotiations

(CHICAGO, IL) –As state lawmakers continue to grapple with budget negotiations, thousands of Illinois voters are hoping officials “do the right thing” and pass a measure that would afford more than 200,000 uninsured working parents in Illinois health coverage. More than 13 percent of those who could benefit from Family Care legislation live in districts represented by the state’s 20 Black elected officials.

According to recent KidCare enrollment statistics based on zip codes, roughly 29,386 uninsured parents who reside in Illinois’ Black Legislative Districts could be eligible. House Bill 23, drafted by the National Center on Poverty Law (NCPL), would provide health insurance to up to 200,000 uninsured working parents of children enrolled in KidCare. The bill, which unanimously passed the House and is currently is pending in the Illinois Senate Rules Committee, is receiving bipartisan support, but will only pass if Gov. George Ryan agrees to include in next year’s budget the \$7 million needed to start the program.

Today, through a spokesman Gov. Ryan reportedly told reporters he would place the measure among his top budget priorities. “There is no better member initiative out there than bringing home health insurance for this many people in your district,” said NCPL deputy director John Bouman.

More than 51,000 KidCare participants reside in districts represented by the state’s Black Legislative Caucus. According to latest figures, State Senate District 13, represented by Sen. Barack Obama and House member Charles Morrow, currently has 10,652 children already enrolled in KidCare, and at least 4,842 of their parents could receive health insurance through extended coverage. In Senate District 12, where Caucus Member Rep. Howard Kenner also governs, 10,757 children are enrolled in KidCare and 4,890 parents are eligible.

Other figures show Illinois Senate District 4, represented by Sen. Kimberly Lightford and House members Clavin Giles (Chicago) and Karen Yarbrough (Maywood), has 9,019 children enrolled in KidCare and at least 4,100 eligible parents; District 3, represented by Sen. Margaret Smith and House members Louvana Jones (Chicago) and Shirley Jones (Chicago), has 8,356 children enrolled in KidCare and 3,798 eligible parents; District 16, represented by Sen. Donne E. Trotter and House members Todd Stroger (Chicago) and Constance Howard (Chicago), has 6,115 children enrolled in KidCare and at least 2,780

eligible parents; District 15, represented by Sen. William Shaw (Dolton) and House members David Miller (Calumet City) and Harold Murphy (Markham) has 5,120 children enrolled in KidCare and 2,327 eligible parents; District 5, represented by Sen. Rickey Hendon and House members Arthur Turner (Chicago) and Annazette Collins (Chicago), has 4,863 children enrolled in KidCare and 2,210 eligible parents; District 14, represented by Sen. Emil Jones and House Caucus member Rep. Monique Davis (Chicago) has 4,131 children enrolled in KidCare and 1,878 parents; and District 57, represented by James Clayborne Jr. (Belleville) and Caucus and House member Wyvetter Younge (East St. Louis) have 2,874 children already enrolled in KidCare and at least 1,306 eligible parents, in District 11, represented by Caucus/House Member Rep. Mary Flowers 2, 518 children are enrolled in KidCare and 1,245 of their parents could receive insurance through Family Care.

[Editor's Note: Calculations based on January 2001 KidCare enrollments for zip codes served by senate districts. Some codes overlap with neighboring districts. In addition, Family Care would cover many more uninsured, working parents of children who receive insurance through Medicaid.]

A new statewide poll of Illinois voters shows overwhelming support for Family Care. The poll, commissioned by Voices for Illinois Children, was taken between May 3 and May 6, 2001, by Market Strategies, Inc. (the pollsters for the Bush campaign in Illinois). The poll was conducted over the telephone and contains the opinions of a statewide random sample of 603 registered voters. The results are accurate within plus or minus four percent. The poll covered a variety of topics, including four questions on Family Care. The questions and the specific breakdowns on the answers are attached.

Among the poll's results:

- 79% of those polled support Family Care
- 70% support Family Care when the expense to the state is included in the question.
- 73% think Family Care is an appropriate step for the state to take, while 23% think that the state should not undertake this kind of spending at this time and that health insurance is up to the individual.

Fully implemented in later years, the Family Care would only cost Illinois \$63 million, because the federal government would match 65 percent of every dollar spent on Kid Care. In Illinois, the state offers health insurance to families with children until the family's income reaches \$8,000. Under Kid Care, the state covers only the children in households with incomes up to \$31,000, leaving struggling parents, in many cases, to forgo life-saving health care services. Family Care would cover the parents in these families.

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