

# Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education *Legislative Update*

February 21, 2007  
Volume 1 - Issue 3

Tuesday, January 16th began the 25th Alaska Legislative session in Juneau. During this session, the GCDSE is keeping you up-to-date by monitoring legislative action and tracking bills that relate to issues concerning health, education, disabilities, and services in the State of Alaska.

## Senate Bill 4: Senior Care Program

This Bill extends the cash assistance benefit program for seniors under the senior care program as established by the Department of Health and Social Services. An eligible individual who meets the income standard will receive a cash assistance amount of \$150 a month from the current \$120 under appropriations that are available to the program. This Bill also eliminates the prescription drug benefit.

**Sponsor(s):** Senator Donny Olson (D-T)  
Chair of Senate Health, Education & Social Services Subcommittee

**Status:** 01/16 read for first time and referred to Senate HES Committee; hearing on 02/19

**Link to Bill Text:**

[http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=SB4](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=SB4)



## House Bill 29: Safe Haven For Infants

This Bill relates to infants who are 21 days of age or less and can be safely surrendered by a parent into the physical custody of a person who the parent reasonably believes to be a peace officer, physician or hospital employee in a hospital or emergency room, etc. without being criminally prosecuted. Currently, there are similar laws in 47 other states encouraging people to not abandon infants in a way that could lead to injury or death. This bill would be known as the *Safe Surrender of Infants Act*.

**Sponsor(s):** Rep(s): Ledoux (R-36), Gruenberg (D-20), Lynn (R-31), Harris (R-12), Neuman (R-15), Wilson (R-2), Dahlstrom (R-18), Gardner (D-24), Olson (R-33), Doll (D-4), Kerttula (D-3), Hawker (R-32)

**Status:** 01/16 introduced; 02/20 held and heard in House HES Committee

**Link to Bill Text:**

[http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HB29](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HB29)

### Held Committee Referrals and Bill Hearings:

#### Senate Bill 4:

##### Senior Care Program

Monday, February 19th State Capitol  
Held and heard in Senate Health, Education & Social Services Comm.

#### House Bill 29:

##### Safe Haven for Infants

“Safe Surrender of Infants Act”  
Tuesday, February 20th State Capitol  
Held and heard in House Health, Education & Social Services Committee

#### House Bill 97:

##### Appropriations for State Aid to K-12 Public Schools

Thursday, February 15th State Capitol  
Held, heard, and moved out of House Health, Education & Social Services Committee

## House Bill 97: Appropriations for State Aid to K-12 Public Schools

This Bill would take effect as an Act 07/01/07 and appropriate \$395,7091,500 from the general fund to the public education fund. Appropriate to the Dept. of Education and Early Development \$32,886,100 for distribution to school districts, state boarding school, and centralized correspondence study for fiscal year ending 06/30/08. Appropriate to the Dept. of Administration \$170,450,921 for deposit in the benefit plan in the teacher's retirement system for increased costs to school districts.

**Sponsor(s):** House Rules Committee by request of the Governor

**Status:** 01/22 introduced and referred to House Health, Education & Social Services Committee; 02/15 heard, held and moved out of House HES Committee

**Link to Bill Text:**

[http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HB97](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HB97)

## House Bill 136: Dental Hygienists

Statute changes in this bill increase access to dental services by allowing hygienists to write an agreement approved by the Board of Dental Examiners, with a dentist to include; Being able to go to rural areas, nursing homes, etc. prior to the dentist seeing the patient to perform initial screenings, take x-rays, apply fluoride, etc. Additional statute changes would allow hygienists to do fillings and allow local anesthesia under general supervision.

**Sponsor(s):** Representative Bill Stoltze (R-16)

**Status:** 02/14 introduced and referred to House Health, Education & Social Services Committee

**Link to Bill Text:**

[http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HB136](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HB136)

## House Bill 140: Medical Assistance Eligibility

This Bill would expand medical assistance coverage for eligible children and pregnant women. It would raise eligibility for the Denali KidCare Program to 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) for single parents and children. It would allow families with incomes up to 350 percent of the FPL to buy into the program using a sliding fee scale. House Bill 140 would also require twenty percent co-pay for those at 250 percent of the FPL or greater.

**Sponsor(s):** Rep(s): Les Gara (D-23), Bob Buch (D-27), Scott Kawasaki (D-9), Andrea Doll (D-4), Berta Gardner (D-24) & Max Gruenberg (D-20)

**Status:** 02/15 introduced and referred to House Health, Education & Social Services Committee

**Link to Bill Text:**

[http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HB140](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HB140)



## House Joint Resolution 10: Medical Assistance For Children

This Resolution relates to the reauthorization of federal funding for children's health insurance and encourages the Governor and the Alaskan Congressional delegation to work together with educators, health care providers, etc. and support additional funding to make available access to children's health insurance. The Denali KidCare Program was authorized in 1997 to provide health coverage for 7,600 children who were enrolled in the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and in December 2006, 12,400 children were enrolled in the Medicaid Program in the State of Alaska.

**Sponsor(s):** House Health, Education & Social Services Committee

**Status:** 02/15 introduced and referred to House Health, Education & Social Services Committee

**Link to Bill Text:**

[http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get\\_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HJR10](http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_fulltext.asp?session=25&bill=HJR10)

### Upcoming Bill Hearing Schedule Details:

**Date:**

**Wed. February 21st 8:00am**

**SB 73 - WWAMI Medical School (companion to HB 18)**

Senate Special Committee on Education hearing  
Rm.205 State Capitol

**Date:**

**Thu. February 22nd 3:00pm**

**SCR 2 - Brain Injury Awareness Month**

House Health, Education & Social Services Committee hearing  
Rm. 106 State Capitol

**Committee Meetings:**

**Dept. of Health & Social Svcs.**

**Thursday, February 22nd 8:00am**

(S) Finance Subcommittee Rm. 519

**Friday, February 23rd 7:30am**

(H) Finance Subcommittee Rm. 519

## House Passes Bill 18: Double WWAMI Participation

### Wednesday, February 14th:

The House passed Bill 18, sponsored by Rep. Kevin Meyer (R-30), which doubles the number of Alaska college students who can participate in the WWAMI program. The WWAMI program allows students to pay in-state tuition, while attending the University of Washington School of Medicine, therefore lessening the cost burden for students from Alaska. House Bill 18 not only doubles the number of eligible applicants to twenty, but also decreases the amount that has to be paid back to the State. Rep. Meyer said, "Our State has a shortage of physicians, which is projected to get progressively worse over the next twenty years due to retirement. A shortage like this has serious implications for access to quality

medical care, rising health care costs and a drain on Alaskan's pocket books." This Bill will allow more Alaskan students to enroll into the WWAMI program and hopefully encourage them to return as doctors and practice in Alaska. According to the Alaska Physician Supply Task Force Report, the national average of physician-population ratio is 2.38 MDs per 1,000 residents. In Alaska it is 2.05 MDs per 1,000 residents. The State would need to hire 375 physicians to meet the national average of physician-population ratio.

**HB 18 has been referred to the Senate for its consideration**

### If you have any Questions or Comments, please contact:

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