

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 850  
 2 INTRODUCED BY E. STAFMAN, A. BUCKLEY, G. FRAZER, M. YAKAWICH, K. ABBOTT, L. SMITH, S.  
 3 HOWELL  
 4

5 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
 6 HUMAN SERVICES TO APPLY FOR AND IMPLEMENT CONTINUOUS ELIGIBILITY FOR CHILDREN  
 7 UNDER 6 YEARS OF AGE IN THE HEALTHY MONTANA KIDS PLAN; ESTABLISHING LEGISLATIVE  
 8 FINDINGS AND PURPOSE; REQUIRING REPORTS TO THE LEGISLATURE; PROVIDING AN  
 9 APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

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 11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:  
 12

13 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Continuous eligibility for young children enrolled in healthy**  
 14 **Montana kids plan programs -- legislative findings and purpose -- direction to department of public**  
 15 **health and human services.** (1) The legislature finds that Montana voters approved a ballot initiative in 2008  
 16 to create the healthy Montana kids plan, which coordinated access to health coverage for children enrolled in  
 17 the Montana medicaid program and the children's health insurance program and increased eligibility standards  
 18 for those programs.

19 (2) The legislature further finds that fluctuations in family income can result in a child being  
 20 disenrolled and subsequently reenrolled in the programs making up the healthy Montana kids plan multiple  
 21 times before the child reaches 19 years of age.

22 (3) The legislature further finds that continuous eligibility for healthy Montana kids plan enrollees  
 23 under 6 years of age:

24 (a) will provide consistent, predictable access to health care services at a time of critical early  
 25 childhood development;

26 (b) will improve health outcomes by providing children with ongoing preventive care and by  
 27 preventing gaps in care that can occur when a family loses coverage and cannot afford necessary health care  
 28 services, including medications;

1 (c) may reduce the costs of health care services by allowing children to receive the right level of  
2 care at the right time in the right setting and by lessening the chances that they will need emergency care or  
3 treatment for conditions that have worsened because of a lack of care; and

4 (d) may improve a child's readiness for school because regular, preventive care may identify  
5 physical, behavioral, and developmental concerns that can be addressed before the conditions affect school  
6 performance.

7 (4) The legislature further finds that providing continuous eligibility until the child reaches 6 years of  
8 age will reduce administrative costs for the department of public health and human services by reducing the  
9 need to redetermine a child's eligibility for renewed or continued coverage under the healthy Montana kids plan.

10 (5) It is the purpose of the legislature to allow children enrolled in both the medicaid-funded and  
11 children's health insurance program-funded portions of the healthy Montana kids plan to remain enrolled in  
12 those programs until 6 years of age even if a change in family circumstances occurs that would otherwise make  
13 the children ineligible for the programs.

14 (6) The legislature directs the department of public health and human services to apply to the  
15 centers for medicare and medicaid services for the necessary waivers to allow for continuous eligibility for  
16 children enrolled in the programs making up the healthy Montana kids plan through the end of the month in  
17 which a child attains 6 years of age. Among other things, the department's research and demonstration waiver  
18 applications must include but are not limited to testing of the following hypotheses:

19 (a) whether ongoing enrollment will:

20 (i) reduce the percentage of children under 6 years of age who are disenrolled and reenrolled in  
21 the programs making up the healthy Montana kids plan;

22 (ii) increase the number of enrollees participating in well-baby and well-child visits, including  
23 developmental assessments to the extent those assessments can be quantified; and

24 (iii) reduce the average monthly cost of services provided to enrollees under 6 years of age; and

25 (b) whether continuous eligibility will reduce administrative costs for the department.

26 (7) The department shall:

27 (a) notify the appropriate interim or standing committees of the legislature of the centers for  
28 medicare and medicaid services' decisions on the waivers within 30 days of the date the decisions are made;

1 and

2 (b) if a waiver request is approved, implement continuous eligibility for children covered by the  
3 waiver decision no later than January 1, 2024.

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5 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Appropriation.** (1) The following amounts are appropriated to the  
6 department of public health and human services to implement continuous eligibility for children under 6 years of  
7 age in the healthy Montana kids plan as provided in [section 1]:

	Fiscal Year 2024	Fiscal Year 2025
9 General Fund	\$2,968,466	\$5,839,166
10 Federal Special Revenue	\$7,463,514	\$14,536,878

11 (2) The legislature intends that the appropriations in this section for fiscal year 2025 be considered  
12 part of the ongoing base for the next legislative session.

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14 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2023.

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