

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

ACTION REFERRAL

TO <i>Floyd</i>	DATE <i>3-10-08</i>
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DIRECTOR'S USE ONLY		ACTION REQUESTED	
1. LOG NUMBER <i>000462</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for the Director's signature DATE DUE <i>3-17-08</i>		
2. DATE SIGNED BY DIRECTOR <i>C.C. Jacobs, M.S. ForLner</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for appropriate signature DATE DUE _____		
<i>* Met w/ Rep. Ott week of 3/4/08. Questions resolved.</i> <i>Close 3/6/07</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Necessary Action DATE DUE _____	

APPROVALS (Only when prepared for director's signature)	APPROVE	* DISAPPROVE (Note reason for disapproval and return to preparer.)	COMMENT
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Harry Ott, Jr.
District No. 93 - Calhoun-Orangeburg-
Lexington Counties
461 Bull Swamp Road
St. Matthews, SC 29135



335-B Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29211
Tel. (803) 734-2998

Committees:

Ways and Means
Public Utilities Review

House of Representatives
State of South Carolina

Minority Leader

Wednesday, February 27, 2008

RECEIVED

Emma Forkner, Director

SC Department of Health and Human Services

Post Office Box 8206

Columbia, SC 29202

Department of Health & Human Services
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Re: Expansion of SCHIP eligibility to 200% of FPL

Dear Ms. Forkner:

I am writing to express my deep concern as to the delay in implementation of the eligibility expansion for the South Carolina State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The legislature, through the efforts of numerous legislators committed to increasing health care to our state's children, worked to develop a program and funding stream that would allow over 70,000 of uninsured children access to our SCHIP program. This effort was done through a bi-partisan effort that recognized the critical need and importance of this program's increased participation. The legislature understood that the agency would need time to implement this program and factored this in to our funding proposal. We provided the agency with four months to develop a plan and submit it to the proper federal authorities as well as negotiate needed contracts to implement this eligibility expansion. I spoke with you in early January and expected to have the program in place before now.

An October 1, 2007 SCHIP start date was provided to SCHHS to allow ample time to develop a plan for the new stand alone SCHIP program. The plan to expand the SCHIP program should have been a priority for your agency. The agency plan amendments should have been sent to Washington immediately to ensure proper approval by CMS. It is my understanding there was quite a delay before this plan was even submitted to CMS. I am astounded that this was not completed by your staff immediately knowing that the federal bureaucratic process could lead to a delay in state implementation. Your staff is familiar with the timeframes and dilatory practices of CMS and it is inexcusable that the plan was not sent in July to ensure a start date shortly after October 1, 2007. While I understand there was some uncertainty about whether or not there would be appropriate federal dollars available to move forward with the expansion, it is inexcusable that it could have been used as an explanation for not submitting a plan amendment earlier. I am convinced that the agency has known for some time that we were not facing any federal funding problems and could have been ready to start the program months ago.

In addition SCDHHS has developed and negotiated managed care contracts for the newly developed Healthy Choices program with numerous providers around the state. This demonstrates that we had an infrastructure of providers ready and willing to take on these new contracts. I am perplexed as to what has been taking so long to get these contracts completed. Once again, all of this should have been started immediately after the eligibility expansion was approved by the legislature.

I understand that the Medicaid agency has a huge responsibility and provides services to many in our state. My last inquiry as to a potential start date for the eligibility expansion resulted in being told it will now be as late as April 1, 2008. This is six full months after we could have begun this program. The children of South Carolina are our future. If they are not healthy they cannot learn and become productive and contributing adults. I am appalled that the agency has failed to provide myself and other legislative leaders with updates and progress reports as to your efforts to implement this program. It is inexcusable that 70,000 children in our state are going to bed each night without the security of knowing their healthcare needs will be met by the state of South Carolina as we promised last June.

I am requesting an immediate update on the progress of the program. This includes not just the date your agency will finally begin implementing the program, but what actions you plan to take to publicize parents about the opportunity to enroll their children through outreach and education. Please contact my office immediately to arrange a time for a meeting so we may discuss my concerns.

Sincerely yours,



Harry L. Ott

Minority Leader

cc: The Honorable Mark Sanford, Governor

The Honorable Glenn McConnell, President Pro Tempore

The Honorable Robert Harrell, Speaker of the House

The Honorable John Land, Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Thomas Alexander, Senator

The Honorable Tracy Edge, Representative

Log: Floyd
C: Jacobs
du. 12/8
✓

Met w/ Repott
w/ 0F 3/4 2
resolved. 1/5/08