

Regular Session, 2011

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 32

BY SENATOR CHEEK

HEALTH/HOSPITALS DEPT. Requests DHH to study the benefits of permitting physicians to apply fluoride varnish to the teeth of children under the age of seven who are enrolled in the Medicaid program.

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To request the Department of Health and Hospitals to study whether to amend Louisiana's  
3 State Medicaid Plan to permit physicians to apply fluoride varnish to the teeth of  
4 children under the age of seven who are enrolled in the state Medicaid program and  
5 receive appropriate reimbursement, to determine the feasibility of providing such  
6 reimbursement, to estimate the costs of such a program, and to submit a written  
7 report of its findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for legislation  
8 and appropriations relative to the issue, to the Senate Committee on Health and  
9 Welfare and the House Committee on Health and Welfare by February 1, 2012.

10 WHEREAS, tooth decay (dental caries) is the most common chronic  
11 childhood disease; and

12 WHEREAS, tooth decay is an almost completely preventable disease; and

13 WHEREAS, early childhood dental caries signal a serious threat to the  
14 current and future health and school success of Louisiana's youngest children; and

15 WHEREAS, sixty-six percent of Louisiana's third grade children have  
16 already experienced at least one cavity in their lifetime according to the Bright  
17 Smiles for Bright Futures Basic Screening Survey conducted by the Department of  
18 Health and Hospitals' Oral Health Program; and

1           WHEREAS, strong evidence and the experience of other states have shown  
2           that the application of fluoride varnish is a safe and effective strategy to significantly  
3           reduce the incidence of cavities among high-risk young children; and

4           WHEREAS, respected professional organizations, including the American  
5           Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dental Association, the American Academy  
6           of Pediatric Dentistry, and the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors,  
7           have endorsed the use of fluoride varnish for individuals at moderate to high risk for  
8           tooth decay in order to reduce lifetime dental caries experience; and

9           WHEREAS, many Louisiana children have limited access to dental care, as  
10          evidenced by the facts that just thirty-eight percent of eligible children served by  
11          Medicaid in State Fiscal Year 2010 received dental care over the course of the year  
12          and fifty-six of Louisiana's sixty-four parishes are considered to be dental health  
13          professional shortage areas; and

14          WHEREAS, young children are far more likely to visit a medical provider  
15          than a dentist, as evidenced by the fact that in 2007, forty-nine percent of Louisiana  
16          children five years of age and younger had not received preventive dental care visits  
17          in the previous year, but just seven percent of children under the age of five had not  
18          received preventive medical care; and

19          WHEREAS, only twenty-eight percent of Louisiana's population has access  
20          to fluoridated water, ranking Louisiana forty-seventh among the states in a recent  
21          analysis conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

22          WHEREAS, Louisiana's low rate of fluoridation of community water  
23          supplies creates an even greater need for fluoride varnish to protect the teeth of  
24          young children; and

25          WHEREAS, the costs of repairing tooth decay and subsequent maintenance  
26          of repairs throughout life could be reduced significantly through fluoride varnish  
27          application at the earliest ages; and

28          WHEREAS, pediatricians and family physicians who see and follow children  
29          from birth are ideally positioned to positively impact the oral health of our youngest  
30          children by applying fluoride varnish, by educating parents on the elements of good

1 oral hygiene in the earliest years, and by referring young children to dentists; and

2 WHEREAS, forty-three other states have approved Medicaid reimbursement  
3 for medical providers to apply fluoride varnish; and

4 WHEREAS, states have projected net savings for their Medicaid programs  
5 as a result of their fluoride varnish programs; and

6 WHEREAS, Louisiana can best seek to save money and improve health  
7 through prevention wherever possible; and

8 WHEREAS, the Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics,  
9 the Louisiana Dental Association, the Louisiana State Medical Society, the Louisiana  
10 Oral Health Coalition, and Agenda for Children support the implementation of a  
11 program to reimburse medical providers for the application of fluoride varnish to the  
12 teeth of children under the age of seven through the state's Medicaid program.

13 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does  
14 hereby urge and request the Department of Health and Hospitals to study whether to  
15 amend Louisiana's State Medicaid Plan to provide Medicaid reimbursement to  
16 medical providers for the application of fluoride varnish to the teeth of children  
17 under the age of seven who are enrolled in the state Medicaid program, to determine  
18 the feasibility of providing such reimbursement, to estimate the costs of such a  
19 program, and to submit a written report of its findings and conclusions, including any  
20 recommendations for legislation and appropriations relative to the issue, to the  
21 Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and the House Committee on Health and  
22 Welfare by February 1, 2012.

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be transmitted  
24 to the secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals and to the Louisiana Oral  
25 Health Coalition.

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The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Greg Waddell.

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DIGEST

Cheek

SCR No.

Requests DHH to study whether to amend Louisiana's State Medicaid Plan to permit physicians to apply fluoride varnish to the teeth of children under the age of seven who are enrolled in the state Medicaid program and receive appropriate reimbursement, to determine the feasibility of providing such reimbursement, to estimate the costs of such a program, and to submit a written report of its findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for legislation and appropriations relative to the issue, to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and the House Committee on Health and Welfare by February 1, 2012.