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Representative Smola supports bill to address gaps in children's health care coverage

BOSTON – In an effort to expand health care access for children and prevent disruptions in coverage, **Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means)**, recently joined with his colleagues to support a comprehensive health and wellness bill, which passed the House of Representatives on a vote of 156-0 on July 31.

House Bill 4012 would protect children who are in the custody of the Department of Children and Families on their 18th birthday by allowing them to continue to receive uninterrupted MassHealth coverage until they turn 26. The bill also establishes a pilot program creating three regional behavioral health centers to provide families with information on services available to children from early childhood through adolescence.

To ensure that consumers have access to accurate information on health care providers operating in Massachusetts, House Bill 4012 requires insurance carriers to establish an electronic provider directory which must be updated at least once a month. In addition, the bill establishes a task force to develop recommendations for ensuring the accuracy of information contained in these directories.

House Bill 4012 also authorizes a series of studies, including:

- a Health Policy Commission analysis of children with medically complex health issues that will look at coverage, access to services, medical resources utilized, and costs;
- a report by the Department of Children and Families on its efforts to improve and reform the foster care system, due by October 5, 2019;

- a task force on pediatric behavioral health screening, which will issue its findings and recommendations by April 1, 2020;
- a legislative commission to examine ways to increase the pediatric workforce and expand access to these providers; and
- a legislative commission to consider best practices for expanding access to school-based health centers.

The bill now heads to the Senate for further action. For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617)722-2100.

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