

VETO MESSAGE:

No

GOVERNOR'S PRESS RELEASE ON SIGNING:

Yes

FOLLOWING WERE PRINTED:

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REPORTS:

No

HEARINGS:

No

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

Yes

"Health safety net catches more kids," 7-27-99, Star Ledger p. 16.

P.L. 1999, CHAPTER 172, *approved July 26, 1999*
Senate, No. 1758 (*First Reprint*)
(CORRECTED COPY)

1 AN ACT concerning eligibility for the Children's Health Care Coverage
2 Program and amending P.L.1997, c.272.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6
7 1. Section 4 of P.L.1997, c.272 (C.30:4I-4) is amended to read as
8 follows:

9 4. a. The Children's Health Care Coverage Program is established
10 in the Department of Human Services. The purpose of the program
11 shall be to provide subsidized private health insurance coverage, and
12 other health care benefits as determined by the commissioner, to
13 children from birth through 18 years of age within the limits of funds
14 appropriated or otherwise made available for the program. The
15 program shall require copayments and a premium contribution from
16 families with incomes which exceed 150% of the official poverty level,
17 which shall be based upon a sliding income scale. The program shall
18 include the provision of well-child and other preventive services,
19 hospitalization, physician care, laboratory and x-ray services,
20 prescription drugs, mental health services, and other services as
21 determined by the commissioner.

22 b. The commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of
23 Health and Senior Services, shall take such actions as are necessary to
24 implement and operate the program in accordance with the provisions
25 governing the State Children's Health Insurance Program in Title XXI
26 of the federal Social Security Act, as provided in Subtitle J of Title IV
27 of the federal "Balanced Budget Act of 1997," Pub.L.105-33.

28 c. The commissioner shall by regulation establish standards for
29 determining eligibility and other requirements for the program,
30 including, but not limited to, premium payments and copayments, and
31 may contract with one or more appropriate entities to assist in
32 administering the program. The commissioner shall take, or cause to
33 be taken, any action necessary to secure for the State the maximum
34 amount of federal financial participation available with respect to the
35 program, subject to the constraints of fiscal responsibility and within
36 the limits of available funding in any fiscal year.

37 d. ¹ [The income eligibility limit for the program shall be the
38 maximum amount permitted by federal law, and the commissioner shall
39 adjust the income eligibility limit as necessary for this

EXPLANATION - Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹ Senate SHH committee amendments adopted March 15, 1999.

1 purpose.】Subject to federal approval, the commissioner shall by
2 regulation establish that in determining income eligibility for the
3 program, any gross family income above 200% of the official poverty
4 level, up to a maximum of 350% of the official poverty level, shall be
5 disregarded.¹

6 (cf: P.L.1997, c.272, s.4)

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8 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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13 Disregards gross family income from 200% to 350% of official
14 poverty level in determining income eligibility for NJ KidCare.

SENATE, No. 1758

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 208th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 15, 1999

Sponsored by:

Senator JACK SINAGRA

District 18 (Middlesex)

Senator DONALD T. DIFRANCESCO

District 22 (Middlesex, Morris, Somerset and Union)

Co-Sponsored by:

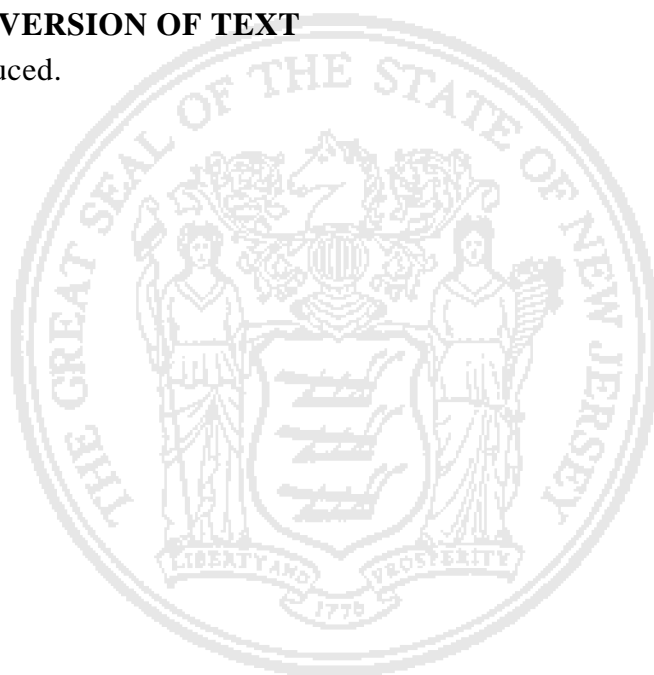
Senators Bucco, Singer, Matheussen and Inverso

SYNOPSIS

Requires income eligibility limit for NJ KidCare to be maximum amount permitted by federal law.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/16/1999)

1 AN ACT concerning eligibility for the Children's Health Care Coverage
2 Program and amending P.L.1997, c.272.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6
7 1. Section 4 of P.L.1997, c.272 (C.30:4I-4) is amended to read as
8 follows:

9 4. a. The Children's Health Care Coverage Program is established
10 in the Department of Human Services. The purpose of the program
11 shall be to provide subsidized private health insurance coverage, and
12 other health care benefits as determined by the commissioner, to
13 children from birth through 18 years of age within the limits of funds
14 appropriated or otherwise made available for the program. The
15 program shall require copayments and a premium contribution from
16 families with incomes which exceed 150% of the official poverty level,
17 which shall be based upon a sliding income scale. The program shall
18 include the provision of well-child and other preventive services,
19 hospitalization, physician care, laboratory and x-ray services,
20 prescription drugs, mental health services, and other services as
21 determined by the commissioner.

22 b. The commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of
23 Health and Senior Services, shall take such actions as are necessary to
24 implement and operate the program in accordance with the provisions
25 governing the State Children's Health Insurance Program in Title XXI
26 of the federal Social Security Act, as provided in Subtitle J of Title IV
27 of the federal "Balanced Budget Act of 1997," Pub.L.105-33.

28 c. The commissioner shall by regulation establish standards for
29 determining eligibility and other requirements for the program,
30 including, but not limited to, premium payments and copayments, and
31 may contract with one or more appropriate entities to assist in
32 administering the program. The commissioner shall take, or cause to
33 be taken, any action necessary to secure for the State the maximum
34 amount of federal financial participation available with respect to the
35 program, subject to the constraints of fiscal responsibility and within
36 the limits of available funding in any fiscal year.

37 d. The income eligibility limit for the program shall be the
38 maximum amount permitted by federal law, and the commissioner shall
39 adjust the income eligibility limit as necessary for this purpose.
40 (cf: P.L.1997, c.272, s.4)

41
42 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

EXPLANATION - Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

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STATEMENT

This bill provides that the income eligibility limit for the Children's Health Care Coverage Program (NJ KidCare) established pursuant to P.L.1997, c.272 (N.J.S.A.30:4I-1 et seq.) shall be the maximum amount permitted by federal law, and that the Commissioner of Human Services shall adjust the NJ KidCare income limit as necessary for this purpose.

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 1758

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 3, 1999

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1758 (1R).

Senate Bill No. 1758 (1R) amends the "Children's Health Care Coverage Act" establishing the Children's Health Care Coverage Program ("NJ KidCare") to disregard certain amounts of family income in determining income eligibility for program coverage.

NJ KidCare provides children from low-income families who are under 19 years of age with subsidized private health insurance coverage, well-child and other preventive services, hospitalization, physician care, laboratory and x-ray services, prescription drugs, mental health services, and other benefits as determined by the Commissioner of Human Services. The program is designed in accordance with the provisions of the "State Children's Health Insurance Program" under Title XXI of the federal Social Security Act to comply with the requirements of that act and is funded in substantial part with federal funds authorized under that title.

The 1997 State law establishing NJ KidCare directs the Commissioner of Human Services to issue regulations setting "standards for determining eligibility and other requirements for the program". The commissioner promulgated regulations establishing three program plans, designated "A", "B" and "C", that plans cover their respective enrollment populations for a broad and essentially common array of health services. The plans differ in the extent to which enrollees share the cost of the coverage through premiums and coinsurance requirements: Plan A enrollees bear none of that cost; enrollees in Plan B pay no premium, but may be liable for up to 5% of annual family income in cost sharing; those enrolled in Plan C pay a monthly premium of \$15 and also may be liable for cost sharing up to the 5%-of-income level. Enrollment eligibility for each plan is based on the level of family income, expressed as a percentage of the federal poverty guideline: for Plan A, the maximum income level is 133% of the guideline; for Plan B, 150%; for Plan C, 200%.

This bill provides that, subject to federal approval, the Commissioner of Human Services shall by regulation establish that any

gross family income greater than 200% but not over 350% of the official poverty level shall be disregarded for purposes of establishing eligibility for coverage under NJ KidCare. The effect of the legislation would be to extend eligibility for the program to families currently disqualified for enrollment because of income.

This bill as reported by this committee is identical to Assembly Bill No. 2978 (1R) as reported by this committee.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This bill has the effect of increasing the family income ceiling for coverage eligibility under NJ KidCare (calculated for 1999 using the 1999 federal poverty guidelines) as follows:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	CURRENT LAW	UNDER THIS BILL
2 Persons	\$22,120	\$38,710
3 Persons	\$27,760	\$48,580
4 Persons	\$33,400	\$58,450

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) is not able to estimate the fiscal impact of the bill, as the number of additional children who may qualify for NJ KidCare as a result of the income eligibility increase and the costs associated with covering those additional children cannot be determined with any degree of confidence. The existing NJ KidCare program covers about 30,000 children, though originally it had been estimated that over 100,000 children would be covered.

While OLS is not able to estimate the cost of the legislation, it notes that \$136 million would be available annually for NJ KidCare, including State matching funds of approximately \$47.6 million. These State and federal funds should be sufficient to cover any increase in the number of children participating in NJ KidCare resulting from an increase in the program's income eligibility requirements.

SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1758

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 15, 1999

The Senate Health Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 1758.

As amended by committee, this bill authorizes the Commissioner of Human Services, subject to federal approval, to establish by regulation that in determining income eligibility for Children's Health Care Coverage Program (NJ KidCare), any gross family income above 200% of the official poverty level, up to a maximum of 350% of the official poverty level, shall be disregarded.

The committee amended the bill to specify that, subject to federal approval, gross family income above 200% of the official poverty level, up to a maximum of 350% of the official poverty level, shall be disregarded, rather than provide that the income eligibility limit for NJ KidCare shall be the maximum amount permitted by federal law as the bill originally provided.

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 1758

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 20, 1999

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1758 (1R).

This bill amends the law establishing the Children's Health Care Coverage Program ("NJ KidCare") to provide that certain amounts of gross income shall be disregarded in determining income eligibility for coverage under the program.

NJ KidCare is a program that provides children from low-income families who are under 19 years of age with subsidized private health insurance coverage, well-child and other preventive services, hospitalization, physician care, laboratory and x-ray services, prescription drugs, mental health services, and other benefits as determined by the Commissioner of Human Services. The program is designed in accordance with the provisions of the "State Children's Health Insurance Program" under Title XXI of the federal Social Security Act and is funded in substantial part with federal funds authorized under that title.

The 1997 State law establishing NJ KidCare directs the Commissioner of Human Services to issue regulations setting "standards for determining eligibility and other requirements for the program". The commissioner has implemented this directive through regulations establishing three program plans, designated "A", "B" and "C". The plans cover their respective enrollment populations for a broad and essentially common array of health services. The plans differ in the extent to which enrollees share the cost of the coverage through premiums and coinsurance requirements: Plan A enrollees bear none of that cost; enrollees in Plan B pay no premium, but may be liable for up to 5% of annual family income in cost sharing; those enrolled in Plan C pay a monthly premium of \$15 and also may be liable for cost sharing up to the 5%-of-income level. Enrollment eligibility for each plan is based on the level of family income, expressed as a percentage of the federal poverty guideline: for Plan A, the maximum income level is 133% of the guideline; for Plan B, 150%; for Plan C, 200%.

This bill provides that, subject to federal approval, the Commissioner of Human Services shall by regulation establish that any

gross family income greater than 200% but not over 350% of the official poverty level shall be disregarded for purposes of establishing eligibility for coverage under NJ KidCare. The effect of the legislation would be to extend eligibility for the program to families currently disqualified for enrollment because of income.

This bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 2978 (1R).

FISCAL IMPACT

Enactment of this legislation would increase the effective family income ceiling on eligibility for coverage under NJ KidCare as follows:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	CURRENT LAW	UNDER THIS BILL
2 Persons	\$22,120	\$38,710
3 Persons	\$27,760	\$48,580
4 Persons	\$33,400	\$58,450

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) is not able to estimate the fiscal impact of the legislation, as the number of additional children who may qualify for NJ KidCare as a result of the income eligibility increase and the cost associated with covering those additional children cannot be determined with any degree of confidence. The existing NJ KidCare program covers about 30,000 children, though originally it had been estimated that over 100,000 children would be covered.

While OLS is not able to estimate the cost of the legislation, it notes that \$136 million would be available annually for NJ KidCare, including State matching funds of approximately \$47.6 million. These State and federal funds should be sufficient to cover any increase in the number of children participating in NJ KidCare resulting from an increase in the program's income eligibility requirements.

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 1758

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

208th LEGISLATURE

DATED: MAY 26, 1999

BILL SUMMARY

Senate Bill No. 1758 (1R) of 1999 authorizes the Commissioner of Human Services (DHS), subject to federal approval, to increase the income eligibility standard for the NJ KidCare program from 200% to 350% of the official federal poverty level (FPL):

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	200% OF FPL	350% OF FPL
2 Persons	\$22,120	\$38,710
3 Persons	\$27,760	\$48,580
4 Persons	\$33,400	\$58,450

AGENCY COMMENTS

DHS and the Office of Management and Budget have not provided any fiscal information on the legislation.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES COMMENTS

OLS is not able to estimate the fiscal impact of the legislation as the number of additional children that may qualify for the NJ KidCare as a result of the income eligibility increase from 200% to 350% of the FPL and the cost associated with covering such additional children cannot be determined with any degree of confidence. The existing NJ KidCare program covers about 30,000 children though originally it had been estimated that over 100,000 children would be covered.

Though OLS is not able to estimate the cost of the legislation, \$136 million would be available annually for NJ KidCare including State matching funds of approximately \$47.6 million. These State and federal funds should be sufficient to cover any increase in the number of children participating in NJ KidCare resulting from an increase in the program's income eligibility requirements.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67.

ASSEMBLY, No. 2978

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 208th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 18, 1999

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman TOM SMITH

District 11 (Monmouth)

Assemblyman STEVE CORODEMUS

District 11 (Monmouth)

Co-Sponsored by:

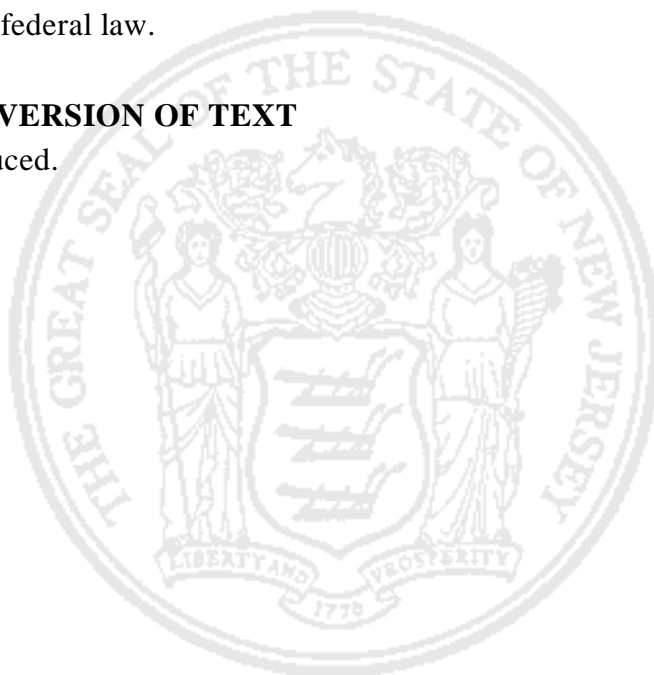
**Assemblymen Thompson, Malone, Cottrell, Kelly, Assemblywoman Heck,
Assemblymen Gibson, DiGaetano, Geist, Luongo, Asselta, Arnone, Lance,
Azzolina, Zecker and Assemblywoman Crecco**

SYNOPSIS

Requires income eligibility limit for NJ KidCare to be maximum amount permitted by federal law.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning eligibility for the Children's Health Care Coverage
2 Program and amending P.L.1997, c.272.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6
7 1. Section 4 of P.L.1997, c.272 (C.30:4I-4) is amended to read as
8 follows:

9 4. a. The Children's Health Care Coverage Program is established
10 in the Department of Human Services. The purpose of the program
11 shall be to provide subsidized private health insurance coverage, and
12 other health care benefits as determined by the commissioner, to
13 children from birth through 18 years of age within the limits of funds
14 appropriated or otherwise made available for the program. The
15 program shall require copayments and a premium contribution from
16 families with incomes which exceed 150% of the official poverty level,
17 which shall be based upon a sliding income scale. The program shall
18 include the provision of well-child and other preventive services,
19 hospitalization, physician care, laboratory and x-ray services,
20 prescription drugs, mental health services, and other services as
21 determined by the commissioner.

22 b. The commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of
23 Health and Senior Services, shall take such actions as are necessary to
24 implement and operate the program in accordance with the provisions
25 governing the State Children's Health Insurance Program in Title XXI
26 of the federal Social Security Act, as provided in Subtitle J of Title IV
27 of the federal "Balanced Budget Act of 1997," Pub.L.105-33.

28 c. The commissioner shall by regulation establish standards for
29 determining eligibility and other requirements for the program,
30 including, but not limited to, premium payments and copayments, and
31 may contract with one or more appropriate entities to assist in
32 administering the program. The commissioner shall take, or cause to
33 be taken, any action necessary to secure for the State the maximum
34 amount of federal financial participation available with respect to the
35 program, subject to the constraints of fiscal responsibility and within
36 the limits of available funding in any fiscal year.

37 d. The income eligibility limit for the program shall be the
38 maximum amount permitted by federal law, and the commissioner shall
39 adjust the income eligibility limit as necessary for this purpose.
40 (cf: P.L.1997, c.272, s.4)

41
42 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

EXPLANATION - Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

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STATEMENT

This bill provides that the income eligibility limit for the Children's Health Care Coverage Program (NJ KidCare) established pursuant to P.L.1997, c.272 (N.J.S.A.30:4I-1 et seq.) shall be the maximum amount permitted by federal law, and that the Commissioner of Human Services shall adjust the NJ KidCare income limit as necessary for this purpose.

ASSEMBLY HEALTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2978

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 17, 1999

The Assembly Health Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 2978.

As amended by the committee, this bill authorizes the Commissioner of Human Services, subject to federal approval, to establish by regulation that in determining income eligibility for the Children's Health Care Coverage Program (NJ KidCare), any gross family income above 200% of the official poverty level, up to a maximum of 350% of the official poverty level, shall be disregarded.

The committee amended the bill to specify that, subject to federal approval, gross family income above 200% of the official poverty level, up to a maximum of 350% of the official poverty level, shall be disregarded, rather than provide that the income eligibility limit for NJ KidCare shall be the maximum amount permitted by federal law as the bill originally provided.

As reported by the committee, this bill is similar to Senate Bill No. 1758 (1R) (Sinagra/DiFrancesco), which is currently pending in the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee.

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 2978

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 3, 1999

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2978 (1R).

Assembly Bill No. 2978 (1R) amends the "Children's Health Care Coverage Act" establishing the Children's Health Care Coverage Program ("NJ KidCare") to disregard certain amounts of family income in determining income eligibility for program coverage.

NJ KidCare provides children from low-income families who are under 19 years of age with subsidized private health insurance coverage, well-child and other preventive services, hospitalization, physician care, laboratory and x-ray services, prescription drugs, mental health services, and other benefits as determined by the Commissioner of Human Services. The program is designed in accordance with the provisions of the "State Children's Health Insurance Program" under Title XXI of the federal Social Security Act to comply with the requirements of that act and is funded in substantial part with federal funds authorized under that title.

The 1997 State law establishing NJ KidCare directs the Commissioner of Human Services to issue regulations setting "standards for determining eligibility and other requirements for the program". The commissioner promulgated regulations establishing three program plans, designated "A", "B" and "C", that plans cover their respective enrollment populations for a broad and essentially common array of health services. The plans differ in the extent to which enrollees share the cost of the coverage through premiums and coinsurance requirements: Plan A enrollees bear none of that cost; enrollees in Plan B pay no premium, but may be liable for up to 5% of annual family income in cost sharing; those enrolled in Plan C pay a monthly premium of \$15 and also may be liable for cost sharing up to the 5%-of-income level. Enrollment eligibility for each plan is based on the level of family income, expressed as a percentage of the federal poverty guideline: for Plan A, the maximum income level is 133% of the guideline; for Plan B, 150%; for Plan C, 200%.

This bill provides that, subject to federal approval, the Commissioner of Human Services shall by regulation establish that any gross family income greater than 200% but not over 350% of the

official poverty level shall be disregarded for purposes of establishing eligibility for coverage under NJ KidCare. The effect of the legislation would be to extend eligibility for the program to families currently disqualified for enrollment because of income.

This bill as reported by this committee is identical to Senate Bill No. 1758 (1R) as reported by this committee.

FISCAL IMPACT

This bill has the effect of increasing the family income ceiling for coverage eligibility under NJ KidCare (calculated for 1999 using the 1999 federal poverty guidelines) as follows:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	CURRENT LAW	UNDER THIS BILL
2 Persons	\$22,120	\$38,710
3 Persons	\$27,760	\$48,580
4 Persons	\$33,400	\$58,450

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) is not able to estimate the fiscal impact of the bill, as the number of additional children who may qualify for NJ KidCare as a result of the income eligibility increase and the costs associated with covering those additional children cannot be determined with any degree of confidence. The existing NJ KidCare program covers about 30,000 children, though originally it had been estimated that over 100,000 children would be covered.

While OLS is not able to estimate the cost of the legislation, it notes that \$136 million would be available annually for NJ KidCare, including State matching funds of approximately \$47.6 million. These State and federal funds should be sufficient to cover any increase in the number of children participating in NJ KidCare resulting from an increase in the program's income eligibility requirements.

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 2978

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

208th LEGISLATURE

DATED: JULY 6, 1999

Assembly Bill No. 2978 (1R) of 1999 authorizes the Commissioner of Human Services (DHS), subject to federal approval, to increase the income eligibility standard for the NJ KidCare program from 200% to 350% of the official federal poverty level (FPL):

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	200% OF FPL	350% OF FPL
2 Persons	\$22,120	\$38,710
3 Persons	\$27,760	\$48,580
4 Persons	\$33,400	\$58,450

AGENCY COMMENTS

DHS and the Office of Management and Budget have not provided any fiscal information on the legislation.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES COMMENTS

OLS is not able to estimate the fiscal impact of the legislation as the number of additional children that may qualify for the NJ KidCare as a result of the income eligibility increase from 200% to 350% of the FPL and the cost associated with covering such additional children cannot be determined with any degree of confidence. The existing NJ KidCare program covers about 30,000 children though originally it had been estimated that over 100,000 children would be covered.

Though OLS is not able to estimate the cost of the legislation, \$136 million would be available annually for NJ KidCare including State matching funds of approximately \$47.6 million. These State and federal funds should be sufficient to cover any increase in the number of children participating in NJ KidCare resulting from an increase in the program's income eligibility requirements.

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67.

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

Office of the Governor
NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Winnie Comfort
609-777-2600

RELEASE: July 26, 1999

**Governor Signs Bills Expanding NJ KidCare Program to Thousands More
Children;
Spends Day Touring Monmouth County**

New Jersey Gov. Christie Whitman today signed legislation to expand the NJ KidCare program, making affordable health insurance available to tens of thousands additional New Jersey children.

"NJ KidCare was established to ensure that uninsured children get the medical care they need," said Gov. Whitman.

"Today we are expanding the NJ KidCare program to assist hard- working families who are struggling to pay for their own individual health insurance plan. We are ensuring that New Jersey families earning the maximum annual income allowed under federal law qualify for the program. And we are increasing our efforts to contact each and every family with children who could be eligible to benefit from NJ KidCare," the Governor said.

Gov. Whitman signed the expansive health care legislation at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft during a day-long tour of Monmouth County.

The legislation, a package of four bills, is intended to increase the number of children in NJ KidCare by expanding the eligibility requirements and by expanding public awareness of the program eligibility and benefits.

S-1659, sponsored by Senators Richard Codey (D-Essex) and Joseph Vitale (D-Middlesex) and Assembly Members Herbert Conaway (D-Burlington/Camden) and Charlotte Vandervalk (R-Bergen), removes the unintended obstacle of a six-month uninsured waiting period before becoming eligible for NJ KidCare for working families who are struggling to pay their own individual health insurance costs.

S-1758, sponsored by Senate President Donald DiFrancesco and Senator Jack Sinagra (R-Middlesex) and Assembly Members Tom Smith (R-Monmouth) and Steve Coredemus (R-Monmouth) increases the eligible income to include families making between 200 and 350 percent of the federal poverty level. Under these expanded guidelines, a family of four with an annual income of \$58,450 would qualify for NJ KidCare, up from the former limit of \$33,400.

In addition to the expansion of who is eligible for the NJ KidCare, the new legislation is intended to increase public awareness of the program.

Gov. Whitman said, "The expansion of NJ KidCare will be wasted if we don't increase awareness of the program. These bills specifically address the need for increased enrollment efforts."

S-1756, sponsored by Senate President Donald DiFrancesco and Senator Norman Robertson (R-Essex/Passaic) and Assembly Members John Kelly (R-Bergen/Essex/ Passaic) and Paul DiGaetano (R-Bergen/Essex/Passaic) allows certain children who are eligible, but not yet enrolled in the program, to receive NJ KidCare benefits for needed medical services at acute-care hospitals, federally-qualified health centers and local health department facilities. The family must be evaluated in an interview and, if the family income appears to meet the qualification of up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, they are given "presumptive eligibility" for benefits. This must be followed up with a completed application and income evaluation to continue receiving NJ KidCare benefits.

S-1757, sponsored by Senate President Donald DiFrancesco and Senator Diane Allen (R-Burlington/Camden) and Assembly Members Samuel Thompson (R-Middlesex/ Monmouth) and Joseph Azzolina (R-Middlesex/Monmouth) establishes partnerships between NJ KidCare and schools, childcare organizations and health care entities to actively reach out to families to identify children eligible for NJ KidCare. The designated community organizations will receive \$25 for each household enrolled in the program. The bill provides \$75,000 to carry out the enrollment program.

The bill signing in Lincroft was one of many events the Governor attended around Monmouth County today. She began the day at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Holmdel to participate in the unveiling of a US Postal Service stamp commemorating Vietnam War Veterans.

During a stop at the Hall of Records in Freehold Borough, Gov. Whitman presented a ceremonial check for \$430 million to the Monmouth County Freeholders. The check represents a combination of school aid, municipal aid, various special appropriations, open space preservation funds and the first phase of the New Jersey SAVER property tax rebate program.

The Governor also visited the newly-constructed Aberdeen-Matawan train station in Aberdeen. The station serves 3,400 travelers daily and is one of five in the NJ TRANSIT North Jersey Coast Line slated to receive high-level platforms, accessible by stairs and ramps, to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The station project costs \$7.1 million, Ofunded by the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority and Transportation Act Fund monies. It is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 1999.

And in Allenhurst, the Governor presented a \$350,000 ceremonial check to the Deal Lake Commission for the lake restoration project. The state funds, from the 1996 bond act approved by voters for the revitalization of New Jersey's ports and lakes, will be matched by in-kind services from the Deal Lake Commission, the Colonial Terrace Protective Assoc., and Ocean Twp.

The Governor concluded the day's events visiting with local residents on walking tours, first through historic Red Bank, home of author and critic Edmund Wilson and jazz great Count Basie, and then through the 95-year-old Keansburg Amusement Park.