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Senate President Pro Tem

MISSOURI GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Rod Jetton
Speaker of the House

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislature Sends \$19.2 Billion State Operating Budget to the Governor *Lawmakers Support \$113 million Increase for K-12 Education*

JEFFERSON CITY – Approving funding to run critical functions of state government with an emphasis on protecting children, the Missouri General Assembly today advanced thirteen budget bills totaling \$19.2 billion for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The bills include a \$113 million increase for elementary and secondary education, restored full funding for the First Steps program offering early intervention services to 8,000 developmentally disabled infants and toddlers, and continued funding one of the nation’s most expansive children’s health insurance programs covering children in families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but can’t afford private health insurance.

Senator Chuck Gross, R-St. Charles, chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee and handled the budget bills in the Senate.

“This budget reflects our state’s priorities and funds the areas of government at the level our taxpayers can afford,” Gross said. “This will make sure Missouri’s children will not lose out on education or health care while also assisting more than 900,000 Missourians with their health care needs.”

The budget allocates approximately \$70 million more for Medicaid services compared to last year to provide health care and mental services to Missouri’s senior citizens, disabled, working parents and children.

The legislation upped eligibility levels for seniors and the disabled compared to a bill that passed earlier this year requiring Medicaid services be funded at the federal minimum levels which is 74 percent of the poverty level for seniors and the disabled. Lawmakers approved funding seniors and disabled who earn up to 85 percent of the federal poverty level or \$677 a month for a single person.

“We were able to provide more than we originally expected when it came to social service programs,” Rep. Brad Lager, R-Maryville, said. “We were able to provide for those who are truly in need while not spending more than our state takes in.”

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The budget also allocates \$32 million to provide an array of optional services to Medicaid recipients including wheelchairs, oxygen equipment, emergency ambulance services, artificial limbs, hospice care, ostomy supplies and eye exams. Children, pregnant women and the blind will continue to receive all optional services.

To prevent an estimated 16,000 families from dropping out of the program, lawmakers adopted a plan amending the premiums required for families participating in the state's MC+ for Kids children's health insurance plan. It replaced level premium payments for families by creating a tiered premium plan for families earning more than 150 percent of the poverty level. Families earning between 151 to 300 percent of the federal poverty level will now pay premiums between 1 and 5 percent based on their income. The premium for a family of four earning 151 percent of the federal poverty level would be \$24.

The budget also funded community and mental health services, including the Bellefontaine Habilitation Center located in suburban St. Louis. The Missouri Rehabilitation Center in Mt. Vernon will also remain open and fully funded.

Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, along with House Speaker Rod Jetton, R-Marble Hill, commended Gross and Lager for their leadership on the budget process.

"Sen. Gross and Rep. Lager have worked in a bi-partisan effort to balance citizens' concerns with our limited money," Gibbons said. "Their commitment and diligence to the process has shaped a budget that protects our children by giving them the best services taxpayers can afford."

"I am proud of the hard work that Rep. Lager and Sen. Gross have put into this year's budget process," Jetton said. "Because of their efforts, state government will be more effective and efficient, and our highest priority - Missouri's children - will receive an even better education."

Lawmakers completed the budget one day before it is required by the constitution to pass.

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