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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOCUSES ON FAMILIES FIRST

~Collaboration and statewide funding to improve health for children~

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) today welcomed Governor Rick Scott’s proposed 2013-14 Florida Families First budget that will improve the health of families and children across the state. Crucial public health funding will enable the Department to provide core family services, increase the availability of physicians for Florida’s families and support the Department’s efforts to promote innovative cancer care and research statewide.

“I appreciate the confidence that Governor Scott has shown in our Department by funding activities that safeguard the health and safety of Florida’s families,” said Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “Our county health departments are ideally positioned in our communities to meet the health needs of our children and families. The Florida Families First budget will create a brighter future for Florida’s families.”

The budget will help deliver essential early intervention and support services for children, add a new screening test to save lives of babies, and make it easier for families in need to receive benefits from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program.

Graduate Medical Education

The proposed budget invests \$80 million in medical residencies that will train a high-quality physician workforce, with emphasis on primary care and general surgery. Florida currently does not have enough residency positions to train all of Florida’s medical school graduates. It is clear that physicians most commonly practice close to where they trained in residency, rather than where they went to medical school. As Florida’s population grows, having enough well-trained physicians in our communities is a priority for quality care.

“We want physicians, educated in Florida, to practice in Florida,” said Dr. Bob Watson, Professor of Clinical Sciences and former Executive Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs at the Florida State University College of Medicine. “The Governor’s budget proposal will ensure that Florida families have physicians to care for them.”

Biomedical Research

Dr. Thom George, Chair of Florida Cancer Control and Research Advisory Council (C-CRAB) says, “Florida’s cancer control structure connects public and private networks, providers of care, cancer centers and policy makers to advance research and assure a high standard of cancer care in this state. Having a concentrated allocation of funding to fuel continued prevention, treatment and research would allow patients, health professionals, and researchers to create the finest system of care in the country for Floridians with cancer.”

With comprehensive and standardized statewide cancer protocols, the \$30 million will enhance an integrated system of cancer care for patients. The streamlined research agenda will encourage collaboration with hospitals across the state so that they may have the capability of providing state-of-the-art cancer treatment to both adults and children.

Early Steps Program

“Early intervention tools are critical to children’s long-term development, and I am grateful for the funding to enhance the Early Steps program,” said President Mobeen Rathore, MD, FAAP Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. “The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) enables all children to receive the necessary support services and will maximize a child’s independent living while enhancing the capacity of families to meet their children’s needs.”

The Children’s Medical Services (CMS) Early Steps Program works in partnership with the Florida Department of Education to support IDEA. The proposed \$9 million in combined federal and state funding represents a 24 percent increase and will enhance services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Such early interventions promote healthier development and reduce long-term educational costs.

Critical Congenital Heart Disease

“With the addition of Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD) panel to the state’s Newborn Screening Program, we will be able to make a positive impact for so many families,” said Heather Smith, SCID Angels for Life. “Each day I look into my child’s eyes, I am encouraged by the state’s ability to screen for these types of diseases early so that children have the best fighting chance in life.”

The total number of disorders tested in Florida’s Newborn Screening Program will increase to 37 with the addition of CCHD, and the \$200,000 budget includes this vital screening for newborns. Congenital Heart Disease occurs in nine of every 1,000 live births, and 25 percent of those newborns are diagnosed with Critical Congenital Heart Disease.

Women, Infants and Children’s (WIC)

“Our state’s neediest children deserve our help, and funding of WIC benefits received electronically will help families to make the best possible choices for their children and their overall health,” said Rep. Jose Felix Diaz, R-Miami-Dade.

Trust fund dollars will help transition the Women, Infants and Children’s (WIC) services to an electronic bank transfer (EBT) card system that supports the delivery of WIC services to approximately 487,000 families. The requested \$6.6 million in funds will help devise an automated system within two years that is tailored to the nutritional needs of each child and family.

To view the Florida Families First budget, please visit: www.floridafamiliesfirst.com.

DOH protects, promotes and improves the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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