

OUR VIEW: Childhood vaccinations should be the last to go

Murf Raquet, for the editorial board

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The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare vaccinated the state's children for years against a number of diseases.

The shots were free for every child regardless of ability to pay.

The program was a good thing.

This month, the state changed the program to exclude those children whose immunizations would be covered by their parents insurance.

The policy change is not a good thing.

The Legislature, which approved the change, did so to save the state an estimated \$2.8 million.

They should have looked elsewhere to make cuts. A healthy populace is vitally important to the state.

The state also did a poor job of informing parents about the changes.

About 60 percent of Idaho children will continue to be covered by the state.

The other 40 percent are covered by their parents' insurance, but that doesn't guarantee those children will receive the inoculations.

The change has put the burden on health care providers, who must pay for the vaccines then bill insurance companies. Parents are responsible for co-pays and shots not covered by their plans.

Before the change, the state simply shipped the vaccines to the providers.

We are concerned the change could create problems for parents who, unfortunately, may opt to not have their child inoculated.

The change caught some providers unprepared.

"One of the big challenges is this has come on us very quickly so we haven't had the opportunity to budget for this change," said Moscow Family Medicine Administrator Jeff Geier. "And more importantly, what we don't want to have happen is for parents to decide that they can no longer vaccinate their children."

This is shaping up to be a hard lesson for bureaucrats in Boise who think just because it looks good on paper it will work in the real world.

Human services seems to take the brunt of cuts in Idaho and this is a prime example of rushing in with the budget knife before the end result is thought through.

We hope no child will become ill because someone was in a hurry to find a few million dollars.