



NEWS

From the Illinois Senate

State Senator Dave Koehler

For immediate release

April 2, 2009

Further information:

Ian Watts 217/782-0591

KOEHLER'S SPOUSAL HOME-CARE BILL PASSES SENATE

SPRINGFIELD—State Senator David Koehler (D-Peoria) is pushing an initiative to allow people to be paid to care for their sick spouses at home.

Senate Bill 135 requires the Department of Human Services and the Department of Healthcare and Family Services to create a pilot program in which spouses can be reimbursed for caring for their sick husbands or wives. Current law forbids this practice. For the time being, the program will be limited to 100 Medicaid-eligible individuals. If the pilot is successful, the program could be expanded to include all eligible Illinois families.

“To me, it only makes sense that one spouse should be able to take care of the other,” said Koehler. “A person’s wife or husband has an intense interest in his or her health. Why should we pay a stranger to provide care when a spouse is qualified and willing?”

The legislation provides the departments with a generous time table to implement the program. They will begin working on a plan in July of 2009 and will present a final report to the General Assembly by March of 2011. This schedule will allow them to develop guidelines that ensure all participants in the program receive proper care and to establish eligibility standards that protect the state from fraud. It will also allow the departments to identify fair wages.

“I was spurred to introduce this legislation by the story of a wife who could not get paid to care for her terminally ill husband,” said Senator Koehler. “Terminal illnesses and debilitating diseases are always emotionally and financially draining for families. We need to do what we can to make their lives easier.”

The woman Koehler is referring to is Kathi Kupferschmid, whose husband is stricken with Lou Gehrig’s Disease.

“My husband gets the best possible care with me. I know the best about my husband’s situation,” said Kuperschmid.

Koehler has long been a supporter of improving Illinois’ health care system. His goal is to ensure that all Illinoisans have access to adequate health care.

Senate Bill 135 has passed the Senate and now awaits consideration by the House.

###