

9. Cover Gardasil Now, Ocean County Observer (1/24/07)

Our View (editorial)

A bill aimed at cutting the risk of cervical cancer in women and girls was given short shrift by the state Pension and Health Benefits Review Committee Monday.

Instead, it should have been given the long-overdue consideration it deserves.

Everyone who deals with household budgets know spending money on prevention now to prevent potential problems later saves money in the long run.

So it is with a bill sponsored by Assembly members Jennifer Beck, R-Monmouth, and Bill Baroni, R-Mercer, which would require insurers to pay for Gardasil, a vaccine for the human papilloma virus, a precursor to most cervical cancer cases.

The committee complained that the measure would add \$2.2 million to state and local government health costs, but consider this: The vaccine costs roughly \$400 compared to the tens of thousands of dollars to treat the disease it prevents.

Brad Greenbaum, president of the New Jersey Association of Health Underwriters, thought the bill looked like “excellent legislation” but asked why it never made it to the state Department of Banking and Insurance for an evaluation of its cost savings and health impact as well. Such a cost-benefit analysis would put the numbers in perspective.

We urge Assemblyman Neil Cohen, D-Union, chair of the Assembly Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee, to refer the measure to the mandated benefits panel for consideration.

It would be tragic to see girls and women lose their lives because callous lawmakers let this initiative die.

END