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Wal-Mart No. 1 in employee Medicaid **State provides health insurance for workers of major companies**

MONTGOMERY (AP) — Many workers at some of the largest companies operating in Alabama get insurance for themselves and their children through state programs and not from their employers.

During a meeting last week with Alabama Medicaid Commissioner Carol Herrmann, state Rep. John Knight Jr., D-Montgomery, expressed concern about major companies that do not offer health benefits to some of their Alabama employees, the Montgomery Advertiser reported Tuesday.

"We spend a lot of money to get them in this state," said Knight, chairman of the House committee that writes the budget for Medicaid and other non-education state services. He said some of these companies receive incentives, such as tax breaks, to locate in Alabama.

Retail giant Wal-Mart tops the list of companies in Alabama whose employees have children on Medicaid, the Advertiser reported, citing state records. Wal-Mart workers' children account for 3,864 children on the Medicaid rolls at a cost between \$5.8 million and \$8.2 million.

Trailing Wal-Mart employees were workers for fast-food giant McDonald's, with 1,615 children on Medicaid. There are a total of 1,380 Medicaid children whose parents work for Taco Bell, KFC and Pizza Hut, fast-food businesses owned by Yum! Brands.

Wal-Mart spokesman Dan Fogleman said the company does not design its health care plans to be supplemented by public assistance.

"As the nation's largest employer, we will almost be the largest by default on any list," Fogleman said.

Wal-Mart employs more than 38,000 people in Alabama. The company offers health coverage to both full- and part-time employees at monthly rates as low as \$38 for a single person and \$153 for a family, Fogleman said. He said the company provides health benefits for 56 percent of its hourly store workers nationwide.

Subway also is on the Alabama Medicaid Agency's list of companies who have employees whose children are on Medicaid.

State Rep. Jay Love, R-Montgomery, owns 14 Subway stores in the Montgomery area. He said he hasn't received any state incentives for locating Subway stores in Alabama.

He said approximately 80 percent of the employees at his stores are part-time. He said full-time Subway employees are offered benefits.

"I would love to offer benefits to all of my employees, but it's just too expensive," Love said.

More than 37 percent of Alabama's children receive health care paid for by Medicaid.

Overall, Wal-Mart and 45 other major employers — including the state of Alabama — account for about 18,000 of those children at a cost of between \$27 million and \$38 million a year