



HMHB Legislative Update

2-19-07

Legislators met Monday through Thursday of last week and are now more than half-way through the 40 day session. Most meetings scheduled for Thursday, February 15 were cancelled as many legislators traveled to Augusta for the funeral Congressman Charlie Norwood. Both the House and Senate are in recess until Tuesday, February 20.

The House and Senate will be in session this week Tuesday through Thursday. After taking Friday and next Monday off, legislators will reconvene on Tuesday, February 27 for the 25th legislative day.

Deliberations on the Amended FY 2007 budget remain at a standstill due to concerns about the PeachCare shortfall. House Appropriations Subcommittees met throughout the week and heard testimony on FY 2008. The House Appropriations Health Subcommittee also held a hearing on Tuesday to hear public testimony on the transition to care management organizations (CMOs). Representatives of the Department of Community Health (DCH) and the three CMOs testified in positive terms; testimony from healthcare providers, patients and advocates painted a less positive picture by citing specific issues. Some providers mentioned denials or delays in payments, preauthorization issues and continuity of care for those who need special services.

PEACHCARE UPDATE

DCH will hold a public hearing on Friday February 23rd on the proposed PeachCare freeze. As you know, the Department of Community Health has announced a proposed freeze on PeachCare enrollment beginning March 11th in response to the temporary shortfall in federal funding. The hearing on the plan is scheduled for Friday, February 23, 2007 from 10:00 am to 12 noon in the Floyd Building, 2 MLK Drive, Atlanta 30334, 20th Floor. This is an opportunity to speak out against restricting access, eligibility or services to PeachCare.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Help save PeachCare! Contact Governor Perdue (Phone 404-656-1776/Fax 404-757-7332), House Speaker Glenn Richardson (Phone 404-656-5020/Fax 404-656-5644) and Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle (Phone 404-656-5030/Fax 404-656-6739). Tell them that you want them to fund the PeachCare shortfall without raising premiums, cutting children off the program or cutting benefits.

Increase funding for the Babies Born Healthy Program. Babies Born Healthy is the only government program that pays for prenatal care for low income pregnant women who do not qualify for Medicaid. Due to the growing number of women in this category, the program has consistently run out of funds before the fiscal year ends. Current funding for FY 2007 is \$3.26 million which serves approximately 5000 women. The women who are eligible but not served due to lack of funds usually end up appearing at a hospital to deliver their baby having had no prenatal care. **It is estimated that an additional \$2 million in funding would allow the program to serve all eligible women. HMHB is working to have this funding added to the FY 2008 budget..**

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Contact members of the House Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee and encourage them to include additional funds for Babies Born Healthy in the FY 2008 budget. The program currently funded at \$3 million, runs out of funds 6 or 7 months into the fiscal year. Some health districts were out of funds by December 31.

Rep. Mark Butler, Chair (Dist.18, Carrollton) 404-463-2245 Capitol office	Rep. Len Walker (Dist.107, Loganville) 404-656-5139 Capitol
Rep. Jeff May, Secretary (Dist. 111, Monroe) 404-656-5105 Capitol	Rep. Stan Watson (Dist. 91, Decatur) 404-656-0220 Capitol
Rep. Buddy Carter (Dist. 159, Pooler) 404-656-0213 Capitol	Rep. Larry O’Neal (Dist. 146, Warner Robins) 404-656-5103 Capitol
Rep. Keith Heard (Dist. 114, Athens) 404-656-0220 Capitol	Rep. Chuck Sims (Dist. 169, Douglas) 404-656-0287 Capitol
Rep. Jerry Keen (Dist. 179, St. Simons Island) 404-656-5052 Capitol	Rep. Richard Royal (Dist. 171, Camilla) 404-656-0265 Capitol
Rep. Judy Manning (Dist. 32, Marietta) 404-656-7857 Capitol	Rep. Penny Houston (Dist. 170, Nashville) 404-656-0202 Capitol
Rep. Bobby Reese (Dist. 98, Sugar Hill) 404-656-0254 Capitol	

You can also contact members of the Senate Appropriations Human Development Subcommittee regarding funding for Babies Born Healthy.

Sen. Renee Unterman, Chair (Dist. 45, Buford) 404-463-1368 Capitol	Sen. Eric Johnson (Dist. 1, Savannah) 404-656-5109
Sen. Don Thomas, Vice Chair (Dist. 54, Dalton) 404-656-6436	Sen. Nancy Schaefer (Dist. 50, Turnerville) 404-463-1367
Sen. Greg Goggans (Dist. 7, Douglas) 404-463-5263	Sen. Valencia Seay (Dist. 34) 404-656-5095
Sen. Johnny Grant (Dist. 25, Milledgeville) 404-656-0082	Sen. Cecil Staton (Dist. 18, Macon) 404-656-5039
Sen. Steve Henson (Dist. 41, Tucker) 404-656-0085	Sen. Horacena Tate (Dist. 38, Atlanta) 404-463-8053

Provide funding for the Cervical Cancer Prevention Vaccine. DHR requested \$4.3 million for the new human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine and Governor Perdue included the funding in his FY 2008 budget. This funding will allow vaccination of uninsured and underinsured girls. HMHB believes that this vaccine should be available for any parent/adult who would like to have the vaccination. The \$4.3 million in the budget will purchase 42,327 doses. Three doses per individual are required. County health departments will receive some doses, but the majority will go to non-public health providers since only 20% of child/adolescent vaccines are given in public health departments. This funding is intended to provide the vaccine for adolescents who are not eligible for federally funded vaccines and who do not have private insurance. **UPDATE:** **Senator Don Balfour (R-9th) has introduced SB 155, which would require female students to be vaccinated for the human papillomavirus (HPV) prior to entering the 6th grade. Parents would be able to opt out due to religious beliefs or inability to pay for the vaccine. Some advocates have questioned mandating the HPV vaccine, especially so as the vaccine is relatively new and quite expensive. Assigned to Senate Health and Human Services.**

Oppose legislation that threatens health insurance benefits such as mammograms, pap smears and childhood immunizations. Many of the current state mandates are for services that ensure prevention and early detection of disease. Bills have been introduced in recent years that would allow health insurance to be sold in Georgia without covering such services. HMHB will continue to oppose such legislation. **UPDATE:** **SB 28 (Sen. Judson Hill, R-Marietta) has splintered into an entire legislative package, including SB 150, SB 151 and SB 153. The purpose of the entire Health Transformation legislative package is to make Georgia the first state with law and policy officially endorsing the high deductible health insurance products (HDHPs). Only 3.5 million HDHPs exist nationwide.**

HMHB will continue to monitor these bills and give more information in the next update.

This update was prepared for HMHB by Mary Frances Williams. If you have questions, email her at mfwilliams@speakeasy.net