

June 25, 2009

Legislative Update

The Connecticut Association for Home Care & Hospice

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Dear Stephanie,

As the General Assembly struggles to complete a budget, the [Connecticut Association for Home Care & Hospice](#) (CAHCH) has been actively engaged in the process. CAHCH's lobbying firm Rome Smith Lutz has obtained a sneak preview of spending cuts under the Democrats' budget. The details, described below, could be voted on by the end of this week.

Please let us know if you have any suggestions regarding the update. Suggestion or questions can be emailed to Kristin LaCosse at lacosse@cahch.org.

General Assembly Democrats to Enact Budget; Veto Expected

An advanced release of the proposed budget cuts obtained by CAHCH provides important details. Despite funding decreases in numerous areas, the good news is that the list of spending cuts by Democrats in the General Assembly does not appear to support Governor Jodi Rell's proposed 1% Medicaid cut.

Among items of note to home care and hospice agencies are:

- **Restructure Medicaid Continuum of Care** - this appears to be the proposal for special needs plans for the dually eligible. Although the budget proposes savings \$100 million over the biennium, this is a much larger number than Governor Rell's proposed \$25 million savings.
- **Telemonitoring** - in a major victory for providers, Medicaid coverage of telemonitors is included.
- **Increased Cost Sharing for CT Home Care Program for Elders**, - a sign of the tough economic times, an increase in out of pocket expenses for patients has been proposed.
- **Procedure Code** - \$355,000 in savings is projected for implementing a new procedure code, which will allow certain visits to be classified as medication administration visits.
- **Medicaid Fraud** - \$19 million in savings was assumed under efforts to combat Medicaid fraud.
- **Required Certification for Medication Administration** - this proposal has been endorsed by the Appropriations Committee and the Governor and appears likely to be enacted.

The proposal also contains significant cuts for nursing homes, to the tune of \$118 million. Lawmakers are aware of the potential impact of such a cut and acknowledge that the drop in funding could lead to more homes declaring bankruptcy. CAHCH will continue to express our concern that there needs to be an infrastructure in the community if homes are closing.

The Senate is expected to pass their budget bill today and the House tomorrow. Since the bill will have significant tax increases, Governor Rell is likely to veto it. Contingency plans are being made for July 1st and beyond in the event that neither a budget nor continuing resolution are in place. CAHCH will keep you posted as events unfold.

Medicaid Hospice Benefit Approved

The proposed Medicaid Hospice Benefit has been approved by the Legislative Regulations Review Committee with only minor grammatical changes. The revised regulations have an anticipated implementation date of October 1st.

The Department of Social Services continues to work towards the development of internal procedures necessary to implement the new regulations. Stay tuned for information regarding an upcoming educational session to outline these new regulations.

Legislators Urge Governor to Sign Landmark Health Care Reform

Connecticut Legislators gathered together on June 23rd to deliver the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership and SustiNet bills directly to Governor Rell's office in Hartford. The legislation will create health insurance pooling for municipalities, small businesses and non-profits.

The legislation was supported by Speaker Christopher Donovan, Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz, Senate President Donald Williams and other legislators and health care advocates. Representatives from small businesses provided insight into the personal challenges they face when procuring health insurance.

Other legislators in attendance included Representatives Betsy Ritter (D-Waterford), David McCluskey (D-West Hartford), Steve Fontana (D-North Haven) and Theresa Conroy (D-Ansonia).

AARP Sponsors Rally at the Capitol

Along with 36 other organizations, AARP held a rally in Hartford on June 23rd to show opposition against proposed budget cuts and a change in the definition of "medical necessity" for Medicaid coverage determinations. Attendees asserted that Connecticut is in desperate need of community solutions, not institutions.

Speaker Donovan expressed that although the Legislators are in the difficult process of creating a budget it is important that any implemented taxes are fair and take care of those in need. In agreement was Senate President Williams who stated "It is wrong to balance the budget on the backs of our senior citizens and disabled people." In addition to Donovan and Williams, also in attendance were Representative David McCluskey (D-West Hartford) and Senators Edith Prague (D-Andover), Gary Lebeau (D-East Hartford) and Mary Ann Handley (D-Bolton).

Grassroots Advocacy Needed

On Friday, June 19, CAHCH was at the Capitol sharing talking points on Medicaid reform. President & CEO Brian Ellsworth discussed numerous proposals with Legislators. Ellsworth provided lawmakers with a fact sheet that included CAHCH's position on proposed budget cuts.

The fact sheet can be accessed [here](#) and CAHCH urges agencies to utilize it in their advocacy activities. As activity builds at the Capitol, it is critical that individual agencies remain active in grassroots advocacy and reach out to local politicians, organizations and others about our concerns.

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