



Legislative Report for the Week Ending April 10, 2015

Appropriations Committee Considers Health Care Legislation

This week the Appropriations Committee took testimony on H.481 and H.487 from Rep. Bill Lippert, Chairman of the House Health Care Committee. Rep. Lippert maintained that the top priorities for his committee were increasing affordability and access to health care, strengthening primary care, and working to bend the cost curve. As such, they agreed to recommend appropriations in the following areas: cost-sharing reductions in private insurance market, primary care Medicaid rates, Blueprint for Health, Healthcare Advocate, Green Mountain Care Board, AHEC, Household Insurance Survey, and task forces to investigate universal coverage and universal primary care. Reaction from the members of the Appropriations Committee was mixed. Some expressed trepidation about raising \$20 million in new revenue after just constructing a balanced budget that required spending reductions and other tax changes. Although a majority of the committee felt that the intentions of the reform proposals were on point, it was clear that further investigation and explanation would be necessary before being approved.

Mr. Al Gobeille, Chair of the Green Mountain Care Board, also provided testimony regarding appropriations, timelines, and goals of health reform proposals that fall within their jurisdiction. Mr. Gobeille spoke primarily about the pursuit of an All-Payer waiver from the Federal government and addressing the Cost-Shift. He also told committee members that the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) recently announced that they would begin the transition towards a value based payment system in the form of a Next Generation Accountable Care Model, which would put ACOs on a trajectory towards a population based payment system with full Federal support. The application for 'Next Gen' is quite competitive and Mr. Gobeille feels that Vermont must continue exploring application for an All-Payer waiver that is best suited to achieve reform and system goals of the state.

Mr. Gobeille was also asked to provide detail about requested budget appropriations that would fund new staff positions, contractual obligations, and actuarial support for the pursuit of an All-Payer waiver and the continuation of other GMCB responsibilities such as rate setting. The GMCB has consistently responded to expansion of its responsibilities with the need for adequate staffing to effectively carry out the new duties.

Last Friday, Dr. Craig Jones, the director of the Blueprint for Health, testified in front of the committee about the proposal to increase per member per month payments to Community Health Teams (CHT), and Blueprint practices. Dr. Jones told committee members that the increases would be used to improve the CHT structure related to Vermont's Accountable Care Organizations and preserve the participation of physician groups in the program.

By the end of last week, there was not enough support to pass H.481 out of the committee, effectively stalling health care legislation progress on the House side. The Appropriations committee may revisit the bill this week, but the House leadership has not identified the health care investments as must pass legislation.

If you are interested in this week's Legislative Committee Meeting schedules, agendas, and a listing of other meetings and activities, please visit the Vermont Legislature's website at <http://legislature.vermont.gov/>. Committee meetings are normally updated daily, and are subject to change without notice. If you plan on attending, you may want to call ahead to verify the agenda.

For more information on legislative proposals, visit the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont website at www.bcbsvt.com or call Cory Gustafson at (802) 249-2225 or Kathy Parry at (802) 371-3205. If you wish to discontinue receiving these updates or know of anyone else who would like to receive it, please call Kathy Parry or send an e-mail to webmail@bcbsvt.com.