

Board of Community Health
Legislative Committee Meeting
April 14, 2005

The Board of Community Health Legislative Committee held its meeting in the Floyd Room, 20th Floor, West Tower, Twin Towers Building, 200 Piedmont Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia.

Committee members present were: Dr. Ann McKee Parker (chairman) and Richard Holmes.

Department of Community Health staff present were Legislative and External Affairs Director Laura Jones.

Dr. Parker called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the Legislative Committee Meeting. She then turned the meeting over to Laura Jones. Ms. Jones stated that the three pieces of legislation that the Department introduced during this session all passed. She proceeded to update the Committee on the three pieces of legislation as well as a couple of bills that were important to the Department.

Senate Bill 140

There are our components that are necessary to assist in the implementation of PeachCare and Medicaid managed care: 1) Exempts the Care Management Organizations (CMOs) from independent review statute; 2) It would exempt HMOs contracting to serve Medicaid members from the premium tax which is currently levied on the gross premiums of all HMOs; 3) It would also allow PeachCare members to be included in the managed care organizations. State law currently prohibits that; and 4) Would verify and strictly enforce the income levels for those families whose children are on PeachCare. This would allow our third party vendor access to the Department of Labor's wage data.

The provision that would allow the Department of Community Health (DCH) Board to set federal poverty levels governing PeachCare was stripped earlier in the Senate. The bill passed out of the House Rules Committee as a substitute containing a provision that would prohibit the department from using restrictive formularies or prior approval for prescription drugs in the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) prescription drug program. The Senate disagreed and the House insisted.

There was a conference committee appointed and they met to deliberate the final position on the bill. An amendment was put forth that there was a need for further study. The bill passed with a provision that would require a study committee. The study committee would consist of three members of the House and three members of the Senate. The Speaker would appoint the House members and the President Pro Tem of the Senate would appoint the Senate members. They will probably start meeting early this summer.

House Bill 392

Creates an assessment fee for CMO participants. This was the first bill that passed both houses. It would create quality assessment fee on organizations that participate in Medicaid Managed Care. The bill is necessary to replace the federal funding that we lose by going into managed care. Final passage was March 24.

House Bill 524

This bill did not pass and was necessary to make administrative changes to the SHBP. We were able to successfully attach the language of House Bill 524 to Senate Bill 284 and secure passage of that bill. There was one minor change before passage of the bill. The bill authorized the Commissioner of DCH to suspend the health insurance coverage of employees whose employer did not remit the correct premium on the employer share side. The language was changed to allow DCH to notify the Department of Education if the employers did not remit the correct share. Then, the Department of Education would have authority to suspend their QBE funds until they came into compliance with remitting the correct employer share.

HB 390

Creates State Commission on the Efficacy of the Certificate of Need (CON) program. This is 11-member board will study all aspects of the CON program in Georgia. Members are appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tem of Senate. The Chairman of DCH Board is a member, the Chairman of the Health Strategies Council is a member, and Commissioner Burgess is an ex-officio member. The sunset date is June 30, 2007.

House Bill 166

Health Share Volunteers in Medicine Act. This bill was introduced by Representative Mickey Channell, and establishes a new program whereby healthcare professionals and other volunteers provide free healthcare to low-income persons. The bill sets forth the definitions and eligibility parameters of the program. It gives DCH the duty of setting the rules to govern this new program. Funding in the amount of \$625,000 was placed in DCH's budget for the start-up costs.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Ann McKee Parker, Ph.D.
Chairman, Legislative Committee