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KHPA Legislative Pulse

3.14.08

Legislative Activity

Legislative updates
focused on KHPA
stakeholders.

House, Senate Committees Review KHPA Budget. Both House and Senate appropriations committees took action on the KHPA budget this week.

On Friday, House Appropriations passed the KHPA budget out of committee after removing all enhancements.

Though recommended in the Governor's budget, the committee removed budget enhancements in favor of waiting to see what the revenue forecast looks like during the Omnibus session.

In the Senate, Ways and Means took action to pass the KHPA budget from its committee.

Health Reform Significantly Gutted in Committees

HOUSE: HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Chaired by [Rep. Brenda Landwehr](#) (R-Wichita), the full committee convened on Thursday and Friday and took action on the recommendations of the [HHS subcommittee](#) which wrapped up its week-long deliberations over components of HB 2934.

As chaired by [Rep. Jeff Colyer](#) (R-Overland Park), the subcommittee recommendations included amending three sections from KHPA-sponsored bills [SB 540](#) and [SB 541](#) into [HB 2934](#), a bill originally introduced by Colyer. The amendments include adding the state education commissioner as an ex officio member of the KHPA Board, language that defines the concept of a medical home, and a provision that requires health insurance companies to offer policies designed specifically for young adults.

Before the committee took final action, [Rep. Jim Ward](#) (D-Wichita) led a narrowly defeated effort to include the majority of the KHPA health reform [package](#). Ward made a motion to strike the contents of HB 2934 and insert the original SB 540 and SB 541, including appropriations for health reform items as well as first year funding of premium assistance at \$4 million.

The vote was defeated on a close 11-10 outcome. The amended HB 2934 is now headed to the House and is expected to be debated on the House floor on Tuesday, March 18th.

RECAP: KHPA HEALTH REFORM BILLS.

[SB 540](#) is the KHPA health reform insurance pieces bill which includes: defining and establishing "very small employer" groups, defining and establishing "young adult policies," changing the age dependants can remain on parental insurance policies to 25, and creates a health insurance clearinghouse.

[SB 541](#) is the KHPA Health Reform bill that makes changes to KHPA duties and composition including: adding the Commissioner of Education to the KHPA Board, defining medical home, creating the small business wellness program, expanding premium assistance to include childless adults, and the creation of the Health Reform Fund.

UPCOMING: The KHPA Board will convene Tuesday, March 18th at 8:30 a.m. at the Ramada, Madison Room, 420 SE 6th Street, Topeka, KS. View the agenda [online](#).

With two exceptions, Ways and Means also removed many of the budget enhancements pending the revenue forecasts at Omnibus.

The committee did include funding of \$6.6 million for the MediKan Preferred Drug List (PDL). MediKan is a state-only medical assistance program.

The committee also included a \$100,000 All Funds (AF)/\$50,000 State General Funds (SGF) allocation for expansion of the Enhanced Care Management program — currently operating as a pilot project in Sedgwick County — to one additional region of the state.

KHPA is also requesting funding for the premium assistance program Kansas Healthy Choices, procurement of an integrated enrollment system, automation of the prescription drug prior authorization system, and continuation of the current Community Health Record pilot project.

House, Senate Committees Work Health Reform (cont.)

SENATE: HEALTH CARE STRATEGIES COMMITTEE

Chaired by [Sen. Susan Wagle](#) (R-Wichita), the Health Care Strategies (HCS) committee took action on Monday, March 10th to amend SB 541 with language that undoes the premium assistance program approved by the Legislature in 2007.

Established by a unanimous vote of the 2007 Legislature, premium assistance is the use of public and employer contributions to help Kansas families living in poverty afford insurance premiums, providing access to market-driven private insurance coverage.

Following this directive, the KHPA has developed the premium assistance program "[Kansas Healthy Choices](#)," representing not only an avenue to private insurance for over 24,000 Kansans but also a state investment of over 3,000 labor hours and a FY 2007 appropriation of \$1 million dollars to achieve the legislative directive this fiscal year. The program will be ready for implementation in January 2009, pending funding from the legislature (first year funding is included in the Governor's budget).

In addition to seeking funding for the first year of Kansas Healthy Choices this session, the KHPA introduced legislation to expand premium assistance to childless adults. This week in Senate HCS, not only did the committee strike the expansion language but it also voted to strike the statutory language authorizing the premium assistance program altogether.

[Sen. Jim Barnett](#) (R-Emporia), who voted against the amendment to forgo the premium assistance program, said, "I'm disappointed. I feel like we've let down the poorest of the poor."

SB 541 has now been assigned to the Senate Ways and Means committee. It's expected they will wait to receive SB 540 from Senate Financial Institutions & Insurance before taking action sometime next week.

Fast Fact: Kansas only provides adult Medicaid coverage for parents living at or below 37% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Childless adults are not eligible for assistance. This is one of the lowest coverage thresholds in the nation.

UPCOMING LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

March 18

Full House. 10:30 a.m. Re: Floor action on HB 2934

March 20

Senate Ways & Means (SWAM) Subcommittee. On adjournment.

Re: Subcommittee Report on KHPA

KHPA Legislative Pulse is a publication by the KHPA Outreach Team distributed weekly during the legislative session. If you have questions or comments, contact Outreach Manager Mandy Cawby at 785.291.3827 or mandy.cawby@khpas.gov.



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