

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Week of April 15, 2019

State Issues

<p>Newly-Revised Single Payer Commission</p>	<p>Before the Legislature adjourned for its Spring Recess last week, Governor Newsom released new details on the single-payer commission he has proposed to replace the existing Council on Health Care Delivery Systems that was established by Assembly leaders and signed into law last year by former Governor Jerry Brown. Newsom campaigned on single payer but has since reset expectations for moving forward. A revamped council appears to lay the groundwork for a path forward to a single payer plan, while alleviating some of the political pressure on the governor from the most vocal single payer advocates.</p> <p>The overhauled "Healthy California for All Commission" would start meeting no later than September 1, 2019 and increase its membership to 13 (from 5 in the original council) - the majority of members would be Newsom appointees. It will be led by the newly appointed Health and Human Services Secretary, Mark Ghaly. The change would be effective July 1 and the commission would act as "an independent body to develop a plan that includes options for advancing progress toward achieving a health care delivery system in California that provides coverage and access through a single-payer financing system for all Californians."</p> <p>The amended budget trailer bill that would establish this new commission can be found at: http://www.dof.ca.gov/Budget/Trailer_Bill_Language/documents/HHSAHealthyCaliforniaforAllCommission.pdf.</p>
<p>Surprise Billing</p>	<p>Surprise billing is garnering attention at both the state and federal level. The following, from the California Health Care Foundation, briefly summarizes the status of federal and state attention to the issue: https://www.chcf.org/blog/lawmakers-grapple-with-patients-surprise-medical-bills/.</p> <p>Meantime, this week Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital announced a revision to their billing practices designed to ease the financial burden on patients, especially in light of several negative press reports on their practice where insured patients were getting "balanced billed" after their emergency visits. Their new policy creates "out-of-pocket" maximum for patients, depending on their incomes.</p> <p>Next Tuesday, April 23, the Assembly Health Committee is scheduled to hear AB 1611 (Chiu) that proposes to build upon previous state law to prevent balanced billing. While there continues to be discussion with the author, the hospital community has an "oppose unless amended." This bill would prohibit hospitals, as a condition of their state licensure, from balance-billing all patients, including those with federally regulated coverage. The bill would establish a default rate for non-contracted emergency and post-stabilization services as the greater of 150 percent of the Medicare rate or the average contracted rate paid by the specific health insurer for the same or similar services in the same geographic area.</p>

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<p>LA County Joins Newsom's Drug Purchasing Plan</p>	<p>On Wednesday, Governor Gavin Newsom announced that Los Angeles County will join his pharmaceutical drug purchasing initiative. While no details have been forthcoming, the Newsom Administration has been working on a sweeping drug purchasing plan for the state, seeking to make California the nation's largest single purchaser of prescription drugs. That would give the state power to negotiate lower drug prices with the pharmaceutical industry by leveraging California's large-scale buying power. Such a drug purchasing pool would reorganize drug purchasing across state agencies and ultimately be open to local governments, private consumers, employers and potentially other states. At his press conference, Newsom said he will encourage other cities and counties to join the state and sign on to his emerging pharmaceutical purchasing plan.</p>
<p>Federal Issues</p>	
<p>Assisted Suicide Legal in New Jersey</p>	<p>Last Friday, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed the Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill Act into law. The governor, who identifies himself as Catholic, said that he prayed over his decision and concluded that although he does not endorse suicide "I cannot deny this alternative to those who may reach a different conclusion" – a similar signing message to that of then-Governor Jerry Brown when he signed California's assisted law. The assisted suicide advocates continue to pursue legalization in Maine and Nevada.</p>

For more information please contact Lori Dangberg at 1215 K Street, Suite 2000 ■ Sacramento, CA 95814
Direct line: 916.552.2633 or fax: 916.552.7652 ■ e-mail: ldangberg@thealliance.net