Hospitals Testify in Support of Hospital Tax Phase-Out

On April 21, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) and Connecticut hospitals testified before the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee in support of HB 7058, An Act Concerning The Hospital Tax. HB 7058 would phase out the hospital tax over a five-year period, starting in 2017. The tax would be eliminated by 2020.

“As you all know, the hospital tax was never supposed to be a tax but became one,” said Stephen Frayne, Senior Vice President of Health Policy, CHA. “These are substantial funds being taken out of hospitals.” Mr. Frayne explained that the tax should be phased out and, until that time, the money returned to hospitals should be equal to the amount taxed. “The objective is to bring in money from the federal government, not impose a tax on hospitals.”

Several hospitals described how the tax negatively affects patients and communities. David Bittner, Senior Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, told legislators that “The loss of revenue associated with paying the hospital tax has forced Saint Francis to make difficult choices, including the elimination of many jobs, service reductions, and delay on investments in technology and infrastructure.”

“The tax will absolutely have a chilling effect on our ability to meet the healthcare needs of the towns we serve in Northeast Connecticut,” said Karl Kamyk, Assistant Vice President, Ancillary Services, Johnson Memorial Hospital.

“Patric McCabe, Senior Vice President of Corporate Finance, Yale New Haven Health System, told legislators that “At a time when we are working to reduce healthcare costs, there are proposals to increase the hospital tax and reduce Medicaid reimbursement. We must stop looking to the hospital industry to solve the state’s budget woes and we must begin to phase out this tax, which is destabilizing an industry with high quality jobs that pay good wages, offer comprehensive benefits, and stimulate the local economy.”

State Representative Roland Lemar (D-New Haven), Vice Chair of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, told Mr. McCabe that he voted for the hospital tax originally because he believed it was a smart policy choice, but now he has realized that hospital concerns were founded. “I’m starting to see hospitals across Connecticut experience dramatic reductions in their operating revenue as we as a state impose a tax structure that is horribly impactful.” Rep. Lamar said he was committed to working with hospitals on this issue.

CHA thanks the hospitals that provided testimony including Bristol Hospital, Hartford HealthCare, Johnson Memorial Hospital, Lawrence + Memorial Hospital, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, St. Vincent’s Medical Center, Stamford Hospital, Western Connecticut Health Network, and Yale New Haven Health System.

Appropriations and Finance Budgets Expected

In the coming days, the Appropriations Committee and the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee will release their FY 2016-2017 biennium budget proposals to the General Assembly. The Appropriations Committee provides its recommendation regarding state spending, while the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee provides the portion regarding revenue. Once the budget has been released, CHA will provide members with an analysis of its impact on hospitals.

The Committees will then debate and vote on the budget. Once passed, the budget will be sent to the House and Senate for further action before being transmitted to the Governor.

Dr. Scott Ellner Named Roger Schenke Award Winner
On April 18, the American Association for Physician Leadership® announced that Scott Ellner, DO, MPH, MHCM, FACS, is the inaugural winner of the Roger Schenke Award. Dr. Ellner, President of the Saint Francis Medical Group, Vice Chairman of the Department of Surgery, and Director of Surgical Quality at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, received this honor for his instrumental role in founding the Connecticut Surgical Quality Collaborative, of which CHA is a part.

When he began the initiative in 2010, Dr. Ellner’s goals were to eliminate “never events” in surgery, establish a new culture of patient safety in operating rooms statewide, and have the program serve as a model that can be replicated in any state.

Training that Dr. Ellner initiated at Saint Francis is a major element of the Collaborative’s program. Using data and analysis from several years of operating room safety questionnaires and surveys on patient safety culture, training sessions for multidisciplinary teams were developed that produced better intra-team and inter-team communication. Teams are empowered to “stop the line” whenever a potential threat to patient safety is encountered.

As founder of the Saint Francis Surgical Quality Task Force, Dr. Ellner has implemented training for all perioperative teams at Saint Francis and instituted evidence-based protocols to virtually eliminate risk of human error in the hospital's operating rooms.

The Collaborative involves a coalition of 22 Connecticut hospitals and three state medical groups. The next meeting of the Collaborative will be held at CHA on Tuesday, April 28, 2015.

The Roger Schenke Award honors individual vision, commitment and innovation in creating education and training programs to improve patient safety and enhance physician leadership. It is named for Roger Schenke, who in 1975 founded the organization that has become the American Association for Physician Leadership®.

April is National Donate Life Month

April is National Donate Life Month, a celebration commemorating those who have received or continue to wait for lifesaving transplants, as well as the donors who save and heal lives. The Connecticut Hospital Association and Donate Life America want to celebrate Donate Life Month by thanking all of our hospital partners and their staff for the vital role they play in donation and transplantation. Hospitals not only facilitate the medical procedures, but are a trusted source of information about donation and state donor registries. Currently more than 123,000 men, women, and children in the U.S. are awaiting organ transplants to save their lives. Thousands more are in need of tissue and cornea transplants to restore their mobility and sight. Registering to be a donor can provide hope to those who wait. You can register to become an organ donor by clicking here.

Education Updates

HRO Fair and Just Accountability
Tuesday, April 28, 2015
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Event Registration

Fair and Just Accountability is for anyone who manages people and the course trains staff how to use the Performance Management algorithm and why Fair and Just Accountability is important to creation of a safety culture.

HRO Leadership Method Training for Ambulatory Practices
Wednesday, April 29, 2015
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Event Registration

Leadership sessions teach the science of safety and behaviors and practices of High Reliability organizations. The ambulatory sessions for Leadership training are focused on staff who work in ambulatory areas.

HRO Train-the-Trainer
Tuesday, May 5, 2015
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Event Registration

Train-the-Trainer will be open to hospitals and ambulatory practices. After leadership training takes place with hospitals and ambulatory practices this spring, individuals who embody a commitment to high reliability should be chosen from those organizations. Those are the trainers of the next generation of high reliability participants.

Facilitating Care Transitions Across the Continuum
Wednesday, May 13, 2015
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Event Registration

This hands-on workshop will provide registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and social workers responsible for managing populations at risk, with practical tools to implement care across the continuum and achieve effective care and care management. Participants will learn how to assess patients and their families for needs and risks; how to work with patients, families, professional, and community teams to develop, organize, and sequence individual plans of care based on evidence and preference for complex patients; the relative costs of
necessary levels of care; how to engage patients and families in their care; and how to honestly and fairly evaluate results. Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss methods to sustain commitment to such intensely challenging yet pivotal positions in the continuum.

In consideration of the staffing needs at many healthcare organizations, and to allow an opportunity for one's entire care and case management team to attend, CHA is repeating this program on Thursday, May 14, 2015.

**HRO Cause Analysis - Two-Day Program**
Wednesday, May 20, 2015
Thursday, May 21, 2015
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Event Registration

Cause analysis teaches staff how to evaluate events, patterns of events, and causes of events and then helps staff ascertain how to implement solutions.

The sessions are for quality staff, safety staff, risk management staff, and other staff that respond to events.