

Thursday, July 27, 2017

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House Approves SEBAC Agreement As Budget Negotiations Continue

On July 25, the state House of Representatives approved the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) union concessions agreement by a vote of 78-72.

Legislators voted largely along party lines, with every Democrat except Rep. John Hampton (D-Simsbury) voting in favor, and every Republican voting in opposition. Proponents claim the agreement is projected to save the state \$1.5 billion over the biennium. The lengthy debate centered around assertions by Democrats that the agreement will provide significant changes to state employees' health and pension benefits, and claims by Republicans that the four-year protection from layoffs and the extension of the contract term to 2027 will unreasonably bind future legislatures. The Senate could vote on the concessions package as early as Sunday, July 30, or Monday, July 31, 2017.

House and Senate Democrats continue to meet with the Office of Policy and Management in an attempt to reach a budget agreement. House Democratic leaders say they remain committed to a budget vote by the end of the month, but Senate Democrats have not yet set a date for a budget vote. Governor Malloy told reporters this week that budget negotiations could stretch into the fall if lawmakers can't reach consensus.

[Update Archives](#)

Also Monday, legislators convened in Hartford for the constitutionally mandated session to consider legislation vetoed by Governor Malloy. Both chambers overrode the Governor's veto of [PA 17-170, An Act Concerning The Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Procedure](#). Two-thirds of House and Senate members voted in favor of overriding the gubernatorial veto, with the House reaffirming the bill by a vote of 101-47, and the Senate by a vote of 24-12.

As Healthcare Debate Continues in Washington, Connecticut Braces for Outcome

As the Senate continues its debate on legislation to repeal major parts of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Connecticut's top elected officials continued this week to express grave concerns about the future of healthcare coverage for the state's citizens.

Connecticut Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy were joined by Governor Dannel Malloy and Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman in their denunciation of the Senate's 51-50 vote on July 25 to begin debate on repeal and replace legislation. Sen. Blumenthal called it a "shameful step," while Sen. Murphy said Connecticut residents have good reason to be "scared stiff."

In a statement, Gov. Malloy said the vote by Senate Republicans to open debate on the "mystery healthcare bill is abhorrent and dangerous."

"What we do know is that every proposal presented by the Republicans to date would result in further destabilizing the individual market, millions losing coverage, and premiums increasing – particularly for our most vulnerable residents," Gov. Malloy said, adding, "I urge the Senate Republican leadership to immediately halt this political charade. They should instead work with governors – both Democrats and Republicans – to stabilize the market and make improvements to the current system that will benefit all Americans, rather than risking the lives of millions."

After the vote to open debate passed on Tuesday, senators began 20 hours of debate on different bills to repeal and replace the ACA. Senators voted down the revised Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA) on Tuesday night, and by Wednesday afternoon had rejected a proposal to repeal significant parts of the ACA without providing a replacement. A Congressional Budget Office report found that 32 million people would lose coverage if the ACA was repealed without a replacement.

In a June 26 report, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that BCRA would result in 22 million Americans losing healthcare coverage. The plan would also result in a nearly \$3 billion annual cut to Connecticut's Medicaid program by 2026, according to a state analysis by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), and could lead to tens of thousands of Medicaid recipients losing their coverage.

Malloy and other state officials have called BRA a "disaster" for Connecticut residents.

Connecticut was the first state in the nation to expand its Medicaid population. There are about 770,000 residents on Medicaid; more than 220,000 gained coverage through the expansion, while another 100,000 people have purchased private insurance through the exchange.

PatientPing and CHA Announce Progress of Innovative Statewide Health Data-Sharing Initiative



Connecticut hospitals are leading the way to better coordinate care through their partnership with PatientPing, a platform that connects multiple providers to improve care outcomes for patients. This real-time, patient-centered application allows thousands of providers to better coordinate with one another to achieve an even higher level of quality care for Connecticut patients.

"This statewide effort is all about improving patient care," said Jennifer Jackson, CEO, Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA). "The system empowers providers to manage patient care in a way that ensures patients get the right care in the right place at the right time."

This initiative ensures patient privacy yet gives providers real-time information about where a patient is being treated. The platform also allows providers to see the patient's full story upon arrival at a healthcare facility, including prior visit history, care instructions from other attributed providers, and any care programs to which the patient belongs. As a patient passes through the healthcare system, this information is shared in real-time with other members of their care teams across the entire continuum—acute, ambulatory, and post-acute facilities—regardless of EMR, provider network, and even state, breaking down institutional barriers that have historically created silos between providers.

Since adopting the technology in May 2016, PatientPing has partnered with 25 Connecticut hospitals to send more than 455,000 notifications to more than 300 post-acute providers, Accountable Care Organizations, and provider organizations across 10 states, including neighboring states such as Massachusetts and Rhode Island. CHA has named this care coordination initiative the Cross Continuum Patient Reference System, an enormous undertaking aimed at improving the health and outcomes of Connecticut patients.

"In just one year, our partnership with CHA has far surpassed our most ambitious expectations," said Jay Desai, Co-founder & CEO, PatientPing. "Providers are delivering dramatically more seamless, high quality coordinated care in Connecticut than they did a year ago. We're immensely proud to work hand-in-hand with an organization as innovative as CHA to improve patient care."

PatientPing's community includes tens of thousands of providers nationwide. In December 2016, PatientPing announced \$31.6 million in funding backed by Andreessen Horowitz and Leerink Transformation Partners with continued participation from existing investors F-Prime Capital (the VC funds of FMR LLC, the parent company of Fidelity) and First Round Capital. PatientPing is rapidly accelerating its nationwide expansion so that any two or more providers that share patients anywhere in the country can simply coordinate with one another.

Michael Collins Named CEO of Eastern Connecticut Health Network



Prospect Medical Holdings announced on July 19 that Michael Collins has been named Chief Executive Officer of Eastern Connecticut Health Network (ECHN). Mr. Collins had served as interim CEO since Prospect's acquisition of ECHN in October 2016.

"I am excited about the progress that is being made at Eastern Connecticut Health Network and look forward to leading this organization as we continue to deliver excellent patient care services to the eastern Connecticut community," said Mr. Collins. "With two acute care community hospitals, the broad range of services available at our South Windsor campus, a visiting nurse association, the DeQuattro Cancer Center and numerous other programs, we are well-positioned to care for patients with the same clinical expertise and compassion that has been a tradition of our care for nearly 100 years."

Prior to joining ECHN in March 2016 as the Integration Officer, Mr. Collins had served as a CEO, CFO, and in other administrative roles for more than 34 years in Massachusetts healthcare networks.

Mr. Collins holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Boston State College and an MBA in business administration from Suffolk University.

State Department of Public Health Announces New CDC Guidelines for Zika Testing Of Pregnant Women



The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is disseminating new federal guidelines for the testing of pregnant women who may have been exposed to the Zika virus.

The new guidance for healthcare professionals was issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) this week. The [CDC guidelines](#) take into account the decline in new Zika virus cases in areas previously impacted by Zika and the increased likelihood of false positive test results among women who were exposed to the virus but never developed symptoms.

"While the CDC has issued new guidelines, the basic warning, especially for pregnant women and their sexual partners remains: avoid travelling to areas where the Zika virus is present, but if travel is unavoidable, protect yourself from mosquito bites and use condoms for the duration of the pregnancy," said DPH Commissioner Raul Pino. "Pregnant women and their healthcare providers should thoroughly discuss any potential exposure, and providers should consider many factors, including timing of the pregnancy, duration of travel, and the intensity of the spread of Zika in the area where the patient traveled, before deciding whether or not to test."

The CDC's new guidelines call on healthcare professionals to ask all pregnant women about exposure to the Zika virus at prenatal visits, and test women who were recently exposed to and showing symptoms of the virus. The guidelines become less stringent if pregnant

women show no symptoms of the virus.

DPH began surveillance for the Zika virus in February 2016. No locally acquired cases have been reported, and every positive case in the state has been related to travel. The Connecticut State Public Health Laboratory will continue conducting Zika virus testing for pregnant Connecticut women.

As of July 25, a total of 1,805 patients have been tested for Zika virus in Connecticut. Of those, 118 patients, including eight pregnant women, have tested positive for Zika. An additional 61 patients, including 47 pregnant women, have tested positive for Flavivirus, a related class of viruses that include Zika, dengue, yellow fever, Japanese encephalitis, and West Nile virus. Of the 179 total Zika or Flavivirus positive patients, the majority contracted the virus while in Puerto Rico (47), the Dominican Republic (38), Jamaica (17), Guatemala (11) and Haiti (10).

DPH is currently following four babies born with birth defects potentially associated with Zika virus to mothers who tested positive for Zika.

