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On the eve of a new administration in Washington, Connecticut's congressional delegation is mobilizing against a repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

On January 15, Connecticut Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy – along with U.S. Representatives Rosa DeLauro (CT-3), Joe Courtney (CT-2), and Elizabeth Esty (CT-5), hosted a rally at the Connecticut State Capitol in support of the ACA that drew more than 500 people. The rally was one of dozens held that day across the country in support of the ACA.

Last week, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) released the following statement about the prospect of a repeal:

*Connecticut hospitals are deeply concerned about how patients would be affected if the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is repealed. Repealing the ACA leaves open questions about how healthcare will be delivered and funded.*

*The ACA expanded coverage to a significant number of individuals; this expansion was funded in part through cuts to Medicare payments to hospitals. If the law is repealed and the cuts to Medicare remain in place, Connecticut hospitals' fiscal stability and sustainability, as well as patient access to care, will be significantly compromised. Connecticut hospitals would, according to current projected estimates, lose approximately \$5.4 billion in Medicare funding over 10 years as a direct result of the ACA being repealed.*

*Also as a direct result of repealing the ACA, Connecticut hospitals stand to lose hundreds of millions in Medicaid funding each year over and above what they already lose as a result of underfunding. Connecticut's Medicaid reimbursement is already one of the lowest in the nation, with providers being paid less than half of what it costs to provide care. Ultimately, one in five people are on Medicaid in Connecticut. Low Medicaid reimbursement leaves them, and everyone else, with less access to care.*

*Patient care and access are the top priorities of Connecticut hospitals. Repealing the ACA without a replacement causes great concern.*

Even as a potential repeal nears, signups for the ACA have continued. In Connecticut, as of the beginning of January, more than 104,000 people had signed up on the state's health insurance exchange. Last year, more than 116,000 people signed up for coverage through the exchange.

Speculation, and concern, about the effects of a repeal are not limited to Connecticut. On January 17, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office released a report estimating that 18 million people could lose their insurance within a year, and 32 million within nine years, if significant portions of the ACA are repealed. That report also concluded that, should that occur, premiums in the individual insurance market could double.

The report from the Congressional Budget Office is expected to put pressure on Congress not to repeal the ACA without first having a replacement plan.

**Certificate of Need Taskforce Sends Recommendations to Governor**

After almost a year of meetings, the Certificate Of Need (CON) Taskforce has voted on a series of recommendations that are scheduled to be forwarded to the Governor this week for consideration.

The 18 recommendations and subsections focus on the regulatory process on a wide range of policy matters, including purchase and conversion of hospitals; opening and closure of nursing homes, radiology or imaging sites, freestanding clinics, and emergency rooms; acquiring equipment; and reducing or relocating services.

Some of the Taskforce recommendations could result in the extension of the review process, the strengthening of the regulatory powers of the Office of Health Care Access, and a focus being put on more transparency and public input into the process.

Once the report is finalized, the Governor and lawmakers will review the document and use the recommendations as the basis for legislation during the 2017 Legislative Session.

The CON Taskforce was formed by Executive Order last February. That order charged the Taskforce with studying ways to streamline the process by which mergers and acquisitions of healthcare facilities are approved by the state. It also placed a moratorium on new decisions by the state Departments of Social Services and Public Health involving larger hospital acquisitions and mergers.

Update Archives



The 16-member panel, headed by Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman, included David Whitehead, Executive VP and Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer, Hartford HealthCare, and Susan Martin, Vice President of Finance, Middlesex Hospital.

Click the following link for the [Draft recommendations of the Certificate of Need Taskforce](#).

### Candidates Preparing for Special Elections



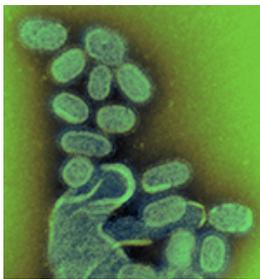
A Special Election was ordered on January 13 by Governor Dannel Malloy to fill three seats in the state legislature left open by Senator Rob Kane (R-Watertown), Senator Eric Coleman (D-Bloomfield), and State Representative Stephen Dargan (D-West Haven).

Sen. Kane submitted his resignation to be nominated for the position of State Auditor. Sen. Coleman will seek a judicial appointment. State Rep. Dargan is expected to be appointed by Gov. Malloy to serve on the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

In anticipation of the Special Election scheduled for February 28, 2017, CHA will feature profiles of the candidates who seek to fill these seats in future editions of *CHA Update*.

With a six-seat margin in the House and a tied Senate, the Special Election will draw close attention from both political parties. The deadline for nominating conventions is January 23, 2017, after which time each major political party will have nominees. Campaigns will begin in earnest immediately following the nominating conventions.

### Flu Cases Increasing in Connecticut and Across the U.S.



Hospitals and other health officials in Connecticut and across the U.S. are noticing a spike in cases of the influenza virus, which is rapidly spreading as the season progresses.

According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, there have been 791 confirmed cases of influenza and 325 hospitalizations in the state so far this season. Statewide emergency department (ED) visits attributed to the "fever/flu syndrome" recently increased and are now 6.8%, well above the level of 5% statewide that is generally considered the minimum threshold when there are elevated influenza-associated ED visits.

Meanwhile, the percentage of outpatient visits from patients with a flu-like illness has recently increased to more than three percent -- well above the one percent that is generally considered the baseline when there are increased influenza-associated visits to outpatient facilities.

Influenza was reported in all eight Connecticut counties, but the majority of cases have occurred in Fairfield, Hartford, and New Haven counties. Five deaths have been reported since the beginning of flu season. The predominant influenza viruses identified this season are Type A, although the percentage of Type B influenza viruses in circulation has recently increased.

The national numbers tell a similar story. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reported flu cases spiked as 2016 came to a close. As of last week, all but one of 10 U.S. regions designated by the agency are witnessing elevated influenza reports, with Connecticut and 20 other states on the East and West coasts seeing widespread flu activity.

Vaccination is a best practice for patient and healthcare worker safety. In 2011, the CHA Board adopted a statewide policy endorsing mandatory influenza vaccination for hospital personnel as part of CHA hospitals' commitment to patient safety. To date, the vast majority of acute care CHA member hospitals in Connecticut have implemented a mandatory participation or mandatory vaccination program.

### Bridgeport Hospital School of Nursing to Close



The Bridgeport Hospital School of Nursing, the last operating nursing diploma school in Connecticut, will close after graduation of the final class of students in May 2017. The decision to close was based on the current trends in nurse education that require an increasing number of baccalaureate-prepared nurses in the workforce.

Since 1884, Bridgeport Hospital School of Nursing has prepared nurses for entry into practice. Throughout the years, the School has maintained accreditation by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing and continually remains competitive with waiting lists for entrance. The board examination pass rate has continued to exceed the national average and be competitive in the state of Connecticut. The School has been a source of strong clinical graduates and has been held in the highest regard.

In 2014, Bridgeport Hospital signed a collaborative agreement with the University of Bridgeport to transition the diploma nursing program to a baccalaureate degree in nursing. So while the Bridgeport Hospital School of Nursing prepares to close, there will be a new RN-to-BSN and BSN program offered at the University of Bridgeport.

Additionally, Bridgeport Hospital's School of Nursing is currently partnering with Housatonic Community College (HCC) to transfer its two Allied Health Programs, Certified Surgical Technology and Central Sterile Processing, to HCC.

## AHA Annual Meeting Provides Opportunity to Advocate for Connecticut Hospitals



**American Hospital  
Association**

Political, policy, opinion, and healthcare leaders will come together May 7-10, 2017, in Washington, DC, for the AHA Annual Membership Meeting. This is an opportunity to network with colleagues, make an impact for Connecticut, and be part of the discussion as hospitals and health systems continue to advance health in America.

AHA's Federal Forum plenaries will offer a national perspective on healthcare and timely tips from former Senators Trent Lott and Tom Daschle on how our country can move beyond politics to governing. This year's meeting features more than a dozen specialized briefings on topics including 340B, emerging governance and diversity practices, as well as ways to achieve regulatory relief. The AHA will also hold a roundtable of

Congressional Chiefs of Staff.

Team discounts are available for four or more registrations, and the early bird discount expires March 24, 2017. Register at [AHA.org](http://AHA.org).

### Education Updates

#### CHA Regulatory Series—Wage and Hour Law Review

Friday, January 20, 2017

9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

[View Brochure](#) | [Event Registration](#)

This program will serve as a refresher for those generally familiar with wage and hour compliance issues, and as an introduction to key issues for those with new responsibilities in this area. Participants are encouraged to bring real or hypothetical questions about regulatory interpretation to the session for an open discussion.

Continuing education credits are offered for this session. Please see the brochure for details.

#### CHA Nurse Preceptorship Program

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

8:30 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

[View Brochure](#) | [Event Registration](#)

Supporting and strengthening the work of nurse preceptors is critical to the development of new nurses and to the retention of the highly skilled staff registered nurses who teach them at the bedside.

CHA's Nurse Preceptorship Program has routinely received positive feedback. It features a curriculum developed by a team of educators from hospitals and schools of nursing, and is designed to provide core content that is foundational for the role of nurse preceptor. This one-day program includes presentations and interactive sessions that cover topics such as roles and responsibilities, characteristics of a professional role model, basics of teaching and learning, tools and strategies for effective communication, principles of constructive feedback delivery, and evaluating competence. The Nurse Preceptorship Program will serve to start new nurse preceptors off with critical information and also may be of interest to nurse preceptors who have not had this content, or would like to be refreshed on these concepts.

Continuing education credits are offered for this session.

#### HIPAA Privacy and Security Basics

Tuesday, February 28, 2017

9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

[View Brochure](#) | [Event Registration](#)

This program will review the current HIPAA Privacy, Security, and Breach Rules, with an emphasis on patient access rights and stepped up enforcement activities by the Office for Civil Rights. The program information includes strategies for maintaining continuous compliance, a review of business associates rules, and practical tips and solutions for remaining compliant with HIPAA. Also covered are: emerging issues in cyber security, trends in state enforcement, devices and technology issues, social media considerations, and the growing risks for HIPAA covered entities and business associates.

Continuing education credits are offered for this session.

