Legislative Update

On Tuesday, Steve Frayne, CHA’s Senior Vice President, Health Policy, continued CHA’s push to protect healthcare coverage and access for Connecticut’s most vulnerable citizens, participating in a press event along with several legislators, other providers, and patient advocates – all members of the coalition formed to restore critical SAGA and HUSKY funding in the biennial budget. CHA has been active in the coalition since its inception last year. The press event occurred as the Human Services Committee was holding a public hearing on SB 1323, An Act Concerning The Administration Of The HUSKY Plan, Part A And Part B, and HB 6927, An Act Concerning Restoration Of Services Available Under The State-Administered General Assistance (SAGA) Program. CHA submitted testimony on the bills, which would expand the HUSKY program and restore needed funding and services to the SAGA program.

On Monday, CHA submitted testimony to the Public Health Committee on HB 6715, An Act Concerning Strike Contingency Plans For Health Care Institutions. CHA opposed this bill because its provisions are unnecessary; hospitals already have standards in place to protect patients in the event of a strike. CHA submitted testimony on HB 6713, An Act Concerning Revisions To Department Of Public Health Statutes, expressing concerns about Section 1 of the bill, which removes language from the birth certificate statute that may subject hospitals to increased litigation and administrative burdens. CHA submitted testimony in support of SB 1208, An Act Concerning Public Health Preparedness, but requested that the Public Health Committee revise the language to clarify the role of hospitals with respect to nerve agent antidote kits and provide hospitals with appropriate protections. CHA also submitted testimony in opposition to HB 6947, An Act Concerning Dialysis Patient Care Technicians. CHA contended that the bill was not needed, because the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has already proposed a rule that would revise the requirements that end-stage renal disease facilities be certified.

As part of its ongoing efforts to support initiatives that benefit and improve public health, CHA also submitted testimony Monday to the Environment Committee in support of HB 6908, An Act Concerning A Connecticut Clean Car Incentive Program.

As the General Assembly’s public hearing phase enters its final weeks, all signs point to another difficult budget debate for the remainder of the session. Following the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) announcement this week that the projected state budget surplus for the current fiscal year was expected to reach $418 million, Governor M. Jodi Rell issued a strongly worded statement cautioning that the surplus should not be viewed as “a new pot of gold” and suggested that the surplus instead be earmarked for the state’s “Rainy Day Fund.” She also pledged to hold the line on the state spending cap and on tax increases.

Meanwhile, several legislative committees held or are planning to hold hearings on raising taxes on alcohol, tobacco, sales, and income, as well as establishing new taxes on businesses. Next Monday, CHA will
testify before the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee in opposition to SB 1360, An Act Concerning The Sales And Use Tax, which was raised this week. CHA will oppose the bill, which lowers the rate of the state sales tax but expands the items and services to which it applies to include, among many other things, a sales tax on patient care services.

CMS Plans To Launch “Hospital Compare” Website Next Friday

On April 1, 2005, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is scheduled to release hospital performance data for the first time on its new “Hospital Compare” consumer website. The release will include six months of data (January - June 2004) for 10 clinical measures related to care for heart attack, heart failure, and pneumonia that Connecticut hospitals have been releasing to CMS for more than a year, as well as four new performance measures that are being released by CMS for the first time but have previously been released by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

Not all participating hospitals will have data displayed for these measures. However, consistent with Connecticut not-for-profit hospitals’ leadership in hospital performance reporting, all those that were collecting this data for JCAHO voluntarily released the information to CMS for posting on its “Hospital Compare” website.

While this is the first time this hospital performance information has been made available to consumers in some states, all of Connecticut’s not-for-profit adult acute care hospitals have been submitting this data to CMS for public reporting for more than a year, and CHA has posted the information on a consumer-friendly “Hospital Performance Reporting” section of its website since last spring. The hospitals have also committed to updating the CHA website quarterly so consumers will have access to the most recent hospital performance information before it is released by CMS. The next CHA website update will occur next week and will include July - September 2004 hospital performance data for all CHA-member adult acute care hospitals.

To date, more than 4,200 hospitals nationwide have submitted data to CMS for this website as part of the voluntary Hospital Quality Alliance (HQA). Since CMS is already heavily promoting the “Hospital Compare” launch, and will formally unveil the website next Friday at a national conference of healthcare journalists, extensive national and state media coverage is likely.

Free Registration For 2005 Trade Show


Levine’s talk kicks off the event at 9:00 a.m., and the exhibit hall, featuring nearly 100 vendors, will be open from 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

The event, which provides a rare in-state opportunity to view a wide variety of healthcare products and services and learn about state-of-the-art technology and solutions, will be held at Mountainside conference center in Wallingford, Connecticut.

Registration is free for CHA members, and includes lunch and refreshments throughout the day. More information on this annual event is available on the CHA website.

CHA To Offer Staffing And Scheduling Program

Effective clinical workforce management, particularly balancing staffing with the demands of patient care, is a key to success in today’s healthcare environment. To help its members achieve this balance, CHA will offer Staffing and Scheduling for Improved Organizational Outcomes from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Thursday, April 14, 2005.

The program will provide managers, who are often confronted with budgetary constraints and staffing shortages, with the skills they need to match the number and competency of staff with patient census and acuity levels. Case studies and best practices for budgeting, scheduling, timely, communication, and automation will be covered.

Upon completion of this program, participants will be able to summarize the principles and outcomes of effective clinical workforce management, identify best practices for scheduling and daily staffing in the clinical workplace, and describe the strategies that support safe staffing levels.

To register, or for more information on this program, visit the education section of the CHA website or contact Rhonda Bates at (203) 294-7267 or bates@chime.org.