House Republicans Present Alternative Budget

As the Democratic caucus of the State Legislature and the Governor prepare to negotiate regarding their respective proposed biennial budgets, the State House Republicans presented their own alternative budget this week. Unlike the Governor’s budget, the House Republican’s proposal includes $87 million in increased funding for hospital Medicaid payments.

CHA and Connecticut hospitals are gratified by the growing consensus within the Legislature to raise hospital Medicaid rates, and are hopeful that the legislative proposals are the first step toward ultimately increasing rates to cover the full cost for treatment delivered to patients enrolled in the Medicaid and State-Administered General Assistance (SAGA) programs. Full-cost payment by state programs is imperative to strengthen Connecticut’s hospitals and enable them to invest in the technologies, staffing, and infrastructure needed to support the health of their communities.

Governor Declares Cover the Uninsured Week

Governor M. Jodi Rell has proclaimed this week to be Cover the Uninsured Week in Connecticut, coinciding with National Cover the Uninsured Week (April 23-29) – an initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. CHA is pleased with the Governor’s proclamation, which raises awareness of the need to improve access to healthcare coverage in the state.

ChimeData Fact Sheet on Emergency Department Utilization Underscores Need to Improve Primary Care Access

Twenty-five percent of Connecticut residents used a hospital emergency department (ED) in 2005, according to a new ChimeData Fact Sheet on ED Utilization published this week on CHA’s website. Between 2001 and 2005, ED utilization increased by nearly 10% – approximately four times the increase in the state’s population over the same period.

Of the more than 1.4 million ED visits in 2005, 400,000 were for non-urgent care. Many of the patients seeking non-urgent care were either uninsured or are enrolled in state-funded health insurance programs and consequently lack more appropriate primary care options. For example, Medicaid beneficiaries are four times more likely than the privately insured to rely on the ED for non-urgent care.

Hospitals throughout the state are experiencing emergency department overcrowding, partly as a result of the lack of primary care for the under- or uninsured. During the current legislative session, CHA has been advocating for initiatives to increase access to primary care, along with other measures that would alleviate ED overcrowding. CHA also has been participating in Public Health Committee Chair Peggy Sayers’ Emergency Department Overcrowding Task Force, which is examining the causes of overcrowding and exploring potential short- and long-term solutions.
Upcoming CHA Educational Programs

**Conscious Communication**

The most effective leaders have learned to communicate with a special understanding of their audience. They are able to assess the needs and styles of others in order to communicate in a way that works.

*Conscious Communication*, which will be held on Thursday May 10, 2007 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at CHA, presents practical, highly effective tools, as well as practice using the tools so they can be implemented immediately. Topics include assessing your communication style and the styles of others, identifying and appreciating style diversity, understanding the impact on staff and patients and strategies for achieving better results.

**Demystifying and Learning from Comparative Performance Data**

Managers and staff are being inundated with comparative performance data from a variety of sources. Some data focus on the efficiency of services while other data reveal variations in clinical practice or patient outcomes. It is often difficult to know how to interpret the results and even more challenging to address departmental deficiencies that might be evident in the data.

To help managers and staff make the best use of comparative data to advance performance improvement and patient safety, CHA will offer *Demystifying and Learning from Comparative Performance Data* on Monday, May 21, 2007 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

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

Deadline Approaches for Annual Awards, Essay Contest

The entry deadline for the 2007 *John D. Thompson Award for Excellence in the Delivery of Healthcare Through the Use of Data*, and the *Connecticut’s Hospital Community Service Award* is Friday, May 4, 2007.

Both awards will be presented at the 89th CHA Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 21, 2007 at the Aqua Turf Club in Southington.

May 4th is also the deadline for 2007 "Healthcare Heroes" Essay Contest submissions. CHA is actively seeking essays, poems, and short stories about healthcare professionals making a difference in the lives of others.

The ten individuals whose "Healthcare Heroes" entries are selected by a panel of judges will be invited to the CHA Annual Meeting, where they will be honored for their winning essay submissions and presented with a $100 cash prize. For the official contest entry form, or to read previous years’ winning entries, go to the "Healthcare Career Center” section of the CHA website.

For additional information on the 2007 CHA awards, contact Jennifer Barrows, Director, Communications, at (203) 294-7213 or barrows@chime.org.

**Sponsorship Opportunities Available For 2007 CHA Annual Meeting**

Each year, more than 600 hospital CEOs, physicians, and other key hospital and healthcare decision-makers gather to celebrate Connecticut hospitals’ accomplishments, discuss the challenges of the future, enjoy first-rate entertainment, and network with one another at CHA’s *Annual Meeting*.

Several targeted sponsorship opportunities are available for organizations to join these decision-makers at CHA’s 89th Annual Meeting, which will be held on Thursday, June 21, 2007 at the Aqua Turf Club in Southington, Connecticut.

For more information on sponsorship opportunities, contact Catherine Rosich, Ph.D., Director, Education Services, at (203) 294-7263 or rosich@chime.org.