Leaders Take Hospital Message to Washington

Connecticut hospital leaders joined CHA and colleagues from across the country at the AHA Annual Membership meeting, held May 6 to 9 in Washington, DC. This important advocacy event provided a valuable forum to present a unified message about the importance and contributions of hospitals and the need to ensure their financial stability.

Hospital leadership met with their Congressional delegation including Senators Richard Blumenthal and Joseph Lieberman, and Representatives Joe Courtney (CT-2), Rosa DeLauro (CT-3), Jim Himes (CT-4), John Larson (CT-1), and Christopher Murphy (CT-5).

In each meeting, hospital leaders and Congressional delegation members engaged in a discussion of hospital initiatives and issues. Discussion focused on Connecticut hospitals' ambitious patient safety, diversity, and quality initiatives as well as the serious issues facing hospitals across the state, including Medicare payment issues such as support for Medicare-Dependent Hospital and Urban Medicare-Dependent Hospital payments, maintaining the rural floor wage index, and support for medical education. Hospital leaders also asked lawmakers to reject cuts to Medicaid, noting the significant contributions already made by hospitals as part of health reform and their commitment to providing excellent care at lower costs, irrespective of the Supreme Court decision on health reform legislation.

Lawmakers expressed appreciation for the great work being done by Connecticut hospitals and encouraged hospital leaders to continue their vocal advocacy through the difficult budget discussions ahead.
Frank A. Corvino, President and CEO, Greenwich Hospital, Recognized as Grassroots Champion

The American Hospital Association Grassroots Champion Award was given to Frank A. Corvino, President and CEO, Greenwich Hospital, at a special breakfast of Grassroots Champions at the AHA Annual Membership Meeting on May 8, 2012. As a 2012 Grassroots Champion, Mr. Corvino was recognized for his exceptional leadership in generating grassroots and community support for issues of importance to hospitals and healthcare.

The award was created to recognize hospital leaders who effectively educate elected officials on how major issues affect the hospital's vital role in the community, who have done an exemplary job in broadening the base of community support for the hospital, and who have been tireless advocates for their hospital and its patients. The Grassroots Champion Award is presented annually to one individual from each state.

“During last year’s state budget debate, Mr. Corvino played a key role in the development and implementation of the successful ‘Protect My Hospital’ grassroots campaign, which sought to support hospitals in state and federal budget actions,” said CHA President and CEO Jennifer Jackson. “Mr. Corvino is a dedicated, tireless advocate on behalf of his hospital and community, and is especially deserving of this award.”

During his 20-year tenure as president and CEO of Greenwich Hospital, Mr. Corvino has been at the forefront of healthcare innovation in such areas of patient safety and satisfaction, integrative medicine, wellness programs, care for the aging, and the “green” movement. Prior to joining Greenwich Hospital in 1988 as COO, he was executive vice president of Our Lady of Mercy Medical Center in New York City. Mr. Corvino has served on many boards, including United Way of Greenwich, Norwalk Community College Foundation, and Greenwich Emergency Medical Services, and the Connecticut Hospital Association.

He received his undergraduate degree in Pharmacy at Fordham University.

General Assembly Adjourns 2012 Regular Session Sine Die: Malloy Addresses Legislators

Shortly after adjourning sine die on midnight, May 9, and following tradition, Governor Dannel Malloy addressed a Joint Session of the General Assembly. In his remarks, the Governor thanked legislators and indicated that though much was accomplished during the 2012 Legislative Session, there is still more work to be done.

He highlighted bills passed that will help create thousands of new private sector jobs, and noted that the state has lowered its unemployment rate and closed the deficit. Moving forward, he urged legislators to continue to create jobs, be vigilant about the state’s finances, and make government more efficient.

Gov. Malloy thanked legislators for their votes to implement education reform. He said the state will now put more education dollars into the lowest-performing districts; create 1,000 additional seats for young children in pre-K; and support teachers, administrators, parents, and students.

Gov. Malloy also noted other major changes, including dramatic changes to the criminal justice system, the sale of alcohol on Sunday, and bills that will make it easier for people to vote and improve the way the state responds to weather emergencies.

Legislators Pass Numerous Bills in Final Days of Session
Leading up to adjournment of the 2012 Legislative Session, both chambers of the General Assembly met and spent long days debating and voting on a host of bills that were proposed in February – the beginning of legislative session. Several bills of interest were recently passed by the House and Senate.

Bills Passed by the House in concurrence with the Senate include:

- SB 23, An Act Enhancing Emergency Preparedness And Response;
- SB 371, An Act Concerning The Administration Of Injectable Vaccines To Adults In Pharmacies;
- SB 232, An Act Extending A Moratorium On Certain Long-Term Care Beds; and
- SB 98, An Act Concerning Deductibles And Guidelines For Colonoscopies.

Bills passed by the Senate in concurrence with the House include:

- HB 5499, An Act Concerning Regulations Relating To Hospice Care;
- HB 5063, An Act Concerning Treatment For A Drug Overdose;
- HB 5038, An Act Implementing The Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning An All-Payer Claims Database Program;
- HB 5321, An Act Concerning The Office Of Health Care Access; and
- HB 5514, An Act Concerning Various Revisions To The Public Health Statutes.

Bills passed in concurrence will be transmitted to the Governor for further action. The Governor will have the option to sign the bills into law, veto the bills, or let the bills become law without his signature.

Of special note, the House failed to pass in concurrence with the Senate SB 243, An Act Concerning Certificates of Merit. As originally filed, SB 243 would undo a 2005 law that discourages the filing of baseless lawsuits against healthcare providers by requiring a plaintiff's counsel to obtain, at the outset of a case, an opinion from a similar healthcare provider indicating there is evidence that the standard of care has been breached. This opinion is documented by a "good faith certificate." After numerous meetings with legislative leaders and the physician community, the bill was amended in the Senate to address many of the concerns of the medical community surrounding the required qualifications of the expert certifying that medical malpractice had occurred. The Senate passed SB 243 on April 27, but the House failed to adopt the Senate amendment on May 3. The bill was subsequently tabled and placed on the House calendar, but never called again during the final days of the legislative session.

Healthcare Law Increases Payments to Doctors for Primary Care

Primary care physicians serving Medicaid patients would see their Medicaid payments rise under a proposed rule announced Wednesday by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. Thanks to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), the increase would bring Medicaid primary care service fees in line with those paid by Medicare. The boost would be in effect for calendar years (CY) 2013 and 2014. States would receive a total of more than $11 billion in new funds to bolster their Medicaid primary care delivery systems.

The proposed rule would implement the PPACA requirement that Medicaid reimburse practitioners of family medicine, general internal medicine, pediatric medicine, and related subspecialists. The increase in payment for primary care is paid entirely by the federal government with no matching payments required of States.

Secretary Sebelius also announced that in 2011, over 150,000 primary care providers nationwide received almost $560 million in higher Medicare payments because of PPACA.

CHA Comments on Meaningful Use Proposed Rules

CHA has filed a comment letter with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on the proposed rules regarding Stage 2 criteria for meaningful use.

In March, CMS published in the Federal Register a proposed rule specifying the Stage 2 criteria that hospitals must meet in order to qualify for Medicare and/or Medicaid electronic health record (EHR) incentive payments. Notably, the proposal pushes the start date ahead from 2013 to 2014, in order to provide enough time for compliance. CHA concurred with the American Hospital Association on the aggressiveness of the scope and timing of the proposed rules, and the high bar that would be set for hospitals to achieve the objectives.

The proposed Stage 2 criteria for meaningful use also includes using standardized terminology for clinical information; streamlining transitions of care by allowing patients to view, download, and transfer electronic copies of their own medical records; and encouraging providers to exchange information to improve quality. CHA stressed concerns raised by Connecticut hospitals regarding the patient portal requirements, especially the 10 percent utilization threshold by patients, the summary of care record exchange requirements, and the potential utilization of Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine (SNOMED) codes for the problem list.

The rule will be finalized during the summer, after CMS has had time to review the public comments.

Education Updates
**HRET Patient Safety Learning Network HCAHPS Workshop**

May 14, 2012 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

CHA and the Health Research & Educational Trust (HRET) HCAHPS learning network will hold a workshop at CHA to review how to use HCAHPS data effectively, and utilize improvement techniques and domain-specific strategies. Through case studies and presentations from program faculty and hospital teams, this interactive session will assist participants in developing strategies to improve the delivery of patient-centered care in their organizations.

For more information, contact Alison Hong, MD, at hong@chime.org. To register, click here.

**Connecticut Hospital Environmental Roundtable**

May 16, 2012 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

CHA presents Landscaping for Health and the Environment: Creating Sustainable, Attractive Landscaped Areas and Garden Spaces to Control Stormwater Runoff. This program is for hospitals, hospices, clinics, nursing homes, and continuing care retirement communities, as well as those with an interest or role in grounds, landscaping, or sustainability issues. The program teaches how to use natural, sustainable approaches to manage the development of grounds while staying in compliance with stormwater regulations.

For more information, click here. To register, click here.