Governor Lamont Announces Historic Partnership Between State and Hospitals

Governor Ned Lamont, Attorney General William Tong, and the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) today announced completion of a historic settlement agreement that will result in a withdrawal of all pending legal claims that various hospitals filed against the state challenging the first hospital user fee, including the lawsuits filed in 2016, and all of the rate appeals brought by hospitals challenging Medicaid payments. The agreement represents a new chapter in the relationship between the State of Connecticut and its hospitals, institutions that serve a critical role in their communities.

The seven-year agreement stabilizes user fee revenues for both the state and the hospitals, and will help fund the state’s share of the Medicaid program and other state programs. This agreement also provides stability in the Medicaid payment system for hospitals and resolves potential state liability.

For both the state and the hospitals, settling these claims avoids a sizable financial risk, uncertainty, and expense of ongoing litigation, and provides predictability and stability over the term of the agreement. By securing this settlement:

- The State of Connecticut is able to abrogate legal claims that potentially exposed the state to up to $4 billion in liability
- Connecticut's hospitals will have a more stable and predictable user fee schedule, with the agreement providing for a reduction in the user fee from $900 million to $820 million by FY 2026
- The agreement increases Medicaid hospital rates by about two percent per year, sets supplemental payments, and provides one-time Medicaid payments this fiscal year
- Further, the parties retain the ability to negotiate changes to the agreement in the event of changes in federal requirements that would impact the terms of the settlement

**Download:** [Executive summary and financial breakdown of agreement](#)

“This agreement represents a new chapter in the state’s relationship with its hospitals,” Governor Ned Lamont said. “Throughout this process, my administration and the Connecticut Hospital Association have been respectful and honest, which has proven instrumental in reaching this settlement. This historic agreement will reduce our state’s potential exposure to billions of dollars in liability and removes that uncertainty for years to come. It is my hope that we can continue down this path to work with our hospitals and providers to increase the quality of care while simultaneously addressing the cost of that care.”

“This is a fair and reasonable settlement that ends over four years of legal and financial risk and uncertainty and provides necessary predictability for both the state and Connecticut’s hospitals,” Attorney General William Tong said. “We are pleased that the hospitals and the Governor have come to an agreement that serves everyone’s interests in this very complex dispute.”

“We want to thank Governor Lamont, his Administration, and the legislative leaders and legislators of both parties for their years of support,” Jennifer Jackson, CEO of CHA, said. “This agreement is a win for patients, hospitals, and the state. Governor Lamont has paved the way for a new, collaborative relationship in which we are working together to provide patients with quality healthcare and strengthen Connecticut’s economy.”

Because the settlement exceeds $2.5 million in value, the matter now must go before the Connecticut General Assembly for approval and adoption of implementing legislation.

First Two Hospitals Launch Social Care Coordination Network Unite Connecticut

Griffin Hospital and Waterbury Hospital are among the first hospitals in Connecticut to launch the Unite Connecticut network – a statewide initiative of the Connecticut Hospital Association that connects health and social services providers through a shared technology platform (Unite Us) to address social needs and deliver integrated care.

“We applaud Connecticut hospitals and health systems, along with community-based organizations, as they implement Unite Connecticut,” said Jennifer Jackson, CEO, CHA. “This effort will improve patients’ lives by ensuring that their social needs are met, and it will transform healthcare and keep our communities healthier.”

The Unite Connecticut rollout will continue at hospitals and health systems across the state through 2021. Through Unite Connecticut, hospitals are able to screen and refer patients to community-based organizations for needs such as housing, food, transportation, and employment, effectively addressing social needs on an individual level.

Unite Connecticut was announced earlier this year; it is a partnership between the Connecticut Hospital Association and Unite Us, an outcome-focused technology company that builds coordinated care networks. Through this work, hospitals and health systems are integrating social determinants of health into healthcare practice to address patients’ social needs.

“We are thrilled to collaborate with Griffin Hospital and Waterbury Hospital to build integrated networks that comprehensively address people’s needs and will transform care delivery in Connecticut,” said Steve Strauss, Head of Network Development for Unite Us. “The Unite Us team will work hand-in-hand with hospitals, affiliated partners and community-based organizations, before, during, and after launch to ensure the network’s integrity and success,” he added.

Unite Connecticut includes a resource database that leverages the work of 211 Connecticut, a program of the United Way of Connecticut, as part of the statewide network.
CHA Conference Focuses on Safe Care and Unexpected Events in Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes

The Connecticut Perinatal Quality Collaborative (CPQC) held its third annual conference on November 25, featuring four guest speakers who focused on safe care and unexpected events in maternal and infant health outcomes.

In a CPQC meeting preceding the conference, CPQC Co-chairpersons Christopher Morosky, MD, Associate Professor, Obstetrics and Gynecology, UConn Health, and Marilyn Sanders, MD, Attending Neonatologist at Connecticut Children’s, and Professor of Pediatrics, University of Connecticut School of Medicine, led an informational session focusing on the work of the CPQC. It includes efforts to combat Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), encourage breastfeeding through the Human Infants with Mothers Own Milk (HI-MOM), and standardize care for mothers with substance use disorder and infants with NAS using a novel approach to assessment called Eat, Sleep, Console (ESC). Dr. Morosky and Dr. Sanders also discussed the work of the Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM).

Mary Cooper, MD, Senior Vice President Clinical Services, CHA, and Associate Professor of Population Health at Jefferson College of Population Health in Philadelphia, opened the half-day conference with a discussion on the impact of the social determinants of health and maternal health. Dr. Cooper provided numerous examples of patients who had poor health outcomes because they lacked transportation, had inadequate housing, or faced food insecurity. She described CHA’s statewide effort to address the social determinants of health through Unite Connecticut, which connects health and social services providers through a shared technology platform to address social needs and deliver integrated care.

“If we address the social determinants of health, we can improve outcomes for people,” Dr. Cooper stated.

Representatives from the Amniotic Fluid Embolism (AFE) Foundation - Miranda Klassen, Diana Masulli, and Patricia Shea, described the organization’s efforts to increase awareness about AFE among healthcare providers, which would allow for more prompt recognition and treatment, leading to improved outcomes for mothers and infants. The three speakers were survivors of an AFE, a life-threatening, acute, and unexpected birth complication. AFE is characterized by acute and rapid collapse of mother and/or baby as a result of an allergic-like reaction to amniotic fluid entering the maternal circulatory system. In collaboration with Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, the Foundation has established an Amniotic Fluid Embolism Registry, a database of AFE cases to allow researchers the ability to advance their knowledge of the condition and develop a means for prevention and treatment.

In her presentation, Audrey Merriam, MD, Yale School of Medicine, described the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Maternal Mortality Review Information Application system for reporting information related to maternal mortality. Connecticut is one of 25 states that participates in the program, which seeks to identify, review, and characterize maternal deaths, as well as identify prevention opportunities. Dr. Merriam is Co-chairperson of the Connecticut Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

The final presentation addressed pediatric emergency response in community hospitals. Beth Natt, MD, Connecticut Children’s; Magna Dias, MD, Yale School of Medicine; Mariann Kelley, MD, Connecticut Children’s; and Marc Auerbach, MD, Yale School of Medicine; discussed pediatric emergency preparedness in Connecticut hospitals and described a statewide pediatric code cart standardization initiative to increase pediatric patient safety.

“The goal is to ensure all emergency departments have essential guidelines and resources to provide effective and appropriate pediatric care,” Dr. Auerbach stated.

The CPQC is committed to providing safe care for women and children; if you are interested in learning more, contact Donna Novella at novellaj@chime.org.

Nuvance Health Names New Sharon Hospital President

Mark Hirko, MD, a healthcare executive with diverse clinical and academic leadership experience, is the new leader of Sharon Hospital, now part of Nuvance Health.

“Sharon Hospital takes pride in its highly skilled and compassionate clinical care, and I am fortunate to join this team of dedicated professionals to enhance the way we deliver care to patients,” said Dr. Hirko, a board-certified vascular surgeon and physician leader with more than 25 years of experience.

Dr. Hirko began his tenure with Health Quest Medical Practice in 2017 as Associate Vice President of surgical services, women’s health, and medical specialties throughout the parent organization’s facilities: Sharon Hospital, Northern Dutchess Hospital, Putnam Hospital Center, and Vassar Brothers Medical Center. He collaborated with senior and physician leadership to enhance care across the system and helped develop undergraduate and post-graduate medical and surgical education programs.

“Mark is a personable, trusted leader and physician who brings commitment to advancing patient care across the board,” said Kerry Eaton, Chief Operating Officer for Nuvance Health. “His track record of inclusive leadership, combined with broad administrative and clinical experience, positions him as an ideal President for Sharon Hospital.”

Previously, Dr. Hirko was Chairman of the Department of Surgery and Program Director of the general surgery residency at Long Branch, NJ-based Monmouth Medical Center, part of RWJ Barnabas Health. Prior to this, he served as Chief of Vascular Surgery and Associate Medical Director of the heart and vascular program at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, Mass.

Patrick Green, Westerly Hospital President and CEO, wins “Grassroots” Award

Patrick Green, President and Chief Executive Officer of Lawrence + Memorial and Westerly Hospitals, was...
recently honored by the American Hospital Association (AHA) for his efforts in building programs and community support for Westerly Hospital.

The AHA’s Grassroots Champion Award is given annually to one individual in each state. Mr. Green won the award in Rhode Island for leadership that helped identify health needs in the Westerly region and then developing solutions to improve residents’ health outcomes. AHA Regional Executive Jack Barry presented Mr. Green with the award at the Hospital Association of Rhode Island’s Annual Meeting.

Among the changes and clinical program expansions made under Mr. Green’s leadership were the opening this fall of a Geriatric Psychiatry unit and a Smilow Cancer Hospital Care Center, both built within Westerly Hospital. The Geriatric Psychiatry unit, with 18 inpatient beds, was created to address the region’s growing behavioral health needs, specifically for adults. It specializes in caring for patients with behavioral issues caused by Alzheimer’s disease, mood disorders, substance abuse, and other forms of dementia.

In another newly renovated wing of Westerly Hospital, a Smilow Cancer Hospital Care Center features eight state-of-the-art infusion rooms and seven exam rooms. The unit also provides patients with regular access to Smilow Cancer Hospital specialists, a dietitian, social worker, and a financial counselor. Mr. Green also helped Westerly Hospital open a $5 million Catheterization Laboratory earlier this year, ushering in a variety of new vascular procedures and, in recent months, he championed efforts to bring expanded orthopedic surgical capabilities to Westerly Hospital.

“It is an honor to receive this award because it validates our commitment to Westerly Hospital and the people we serve,” Mr. Green said. “It is also an honor to share this award with everyone at Westerly Hospital, and those within our health system and the community, who have worked so hard, together as a team, to achieve extraordinary enhancements to our services, all for the benefit of our patients.”

Mr. Green is also an Executive Vice President of Yale New Haven Health and is an AHA At-large Delegate.

Special Elections Called to Fill Two Vacated Seats

On Friday, November 29, Governor Ned Lamont announced that there will be two Special Elections held on Tuesday, January 14, 2020. The Special Elections were called to fill two vacancies in the Connecticut House of Representatives – one due to a resignation of a member and one due to the unexpected passing of a member.

In the 48th House District, voters will go to the polls to replace former Rep. Linda Orange (D-Colchester), who passed away on November 20. The 48th House District includes portions of Colchester, Lebanon, Mansfield, and Windham. There are currently no candidates for this seat.

In the 132nd House District, voters will go to the polls to replace former State Rep. Brenda Kupchick (R-Fairfield) who resigned her seat after winning a race for First Selectman in Fairfield. Last week, Jennifer Leeper was endorsed by Fairfield's Democratic Town Committee to run for the seat. Ms. Leeper is a current member of the Board of Education and has spent her professional career working in education as a policy and data analyst for the Connecticut Department of Education. Republicans have endorsed Brian Farnen, who is a Representative Town Meeting member in Fairfield and is General Counsel and Chief Legal Officer at the Connecticut Green Bank. The 132nd House District includes a portion of Fairfield. Lastly, there will be a third Special Election on a yet-to-be-determined date. State Rep. Fred Camillo (R-Greenwich) submitted his resignation from the House of Representatives, with an effective resignation date of December 2. He was sworn in as First Selectman of Greenwich this past weekend after winning an open seat in the November municipal elections.

Under state law, the Governor is required to issue a Writ of Special Election within 10 days of a vacancy in the General Assembly, and a Special Election must be held exactly 46 days after the date the Writ was issued.


December 1–7 is National Influenza Vaccination Week

December 1–7 has been established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as National Influenza Vaccination Week to highlight the importance of influenza vaccination.

According to the CDC, previous flu vaccination coverage data have shown that few people get vaccinated against influenza after the end of November. Created in 2005, the annual awareness campaign highlights the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond.

As of November 23, 190 people in Connecticut tested positive for the flu and 69 have been hospitalized with the illness, according to the state Department of Public Health. There have also been 2 deaths reported by DPH from influenza-related illness. The deaths involved a resident of Litchfield County and a resident of Fairfield County, both of whom were over 65. Flu activity is now reported to be regional.

For the sixth year, CHA is participating in the American Hospital Association’s annual United Against the Flu campaign, which uses social media outreach to bring national attention to the need for flu vaccinations.

The CDC, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee recommend that all healthcare workers get vaccinated annually.

In 2011, the CHA Board of Trustees adopted a statewide policy endorsing mandatory influenza vaccination for hospital personnel as part of CHA hospitals’ commitment to patient safety. The vast majority of CHA acute care member hospitals have implemented a mandatory participation or mandatory vaccination program.

CHA Program Provides Guidance on Responding to Unexpected Harm

On Wednesday, December 18, 2019, CHA will offer HillV: When Words and Actions Matter Most: Responding to Unexpected Harm, a program that will demonstrate how to respond to unexpected patient harm. The program is part of CHA’s statewide Communication and Resolution Program Collaborative, which was created in February 2019 to increase transparency and improve communication for patients and families who have experienced harm, and to acknowledge the impact that patient harm has had on patients and families, as well as on providers and staff. Please register here.
The program will be held from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at CHA, and is being presented as part of the Partnership for Patients HIIN educational series.

The program, first offered by CHA in October, will include background on the Communication and Optimal Resolution (CANDOR) process, an approach to respond in a timely, thorough, and just way to unexpected patient harm events.

Bruce Lambert, PhD, Professor, Department of Communications Studies and Director, Center for Communication and Health, Northwestern University, will discuss best practices for empathetic communication.

Timothy McDonald, MD, JD, Director, Center for Open and Honest Communication, MedStar Institute for Quality and Safety, and Professor of Law at Loyola University, will lead participants in demonstrations of best approaches, providing opportunities to obtain hands-on practice.

Professional actors will provide guidance through experiential scenarios. The Communication and Resolution Program Collaborative is a multi-year engagement of CHA members working together to meet shared goals and implement routine processes to effect change.

Education Updates

Nursing Professional Development Certification Preparation
Thursday, December 12, 2019
Friday, December 13, 2019
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
View Brochure | Event Registration

This program is intended to enable the learner to complete successfully the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) generalist examination in nursing professional development. This course also enables novice NPD practitioners to develop foundational knowledge for the specialty practice.

Please note: this is a two-session program; participants must attend both sessions.

HIPAA Privacy, Security and Breach Rules: Keeping Current to Remain Compliant
Thursday, January 9, 2020
9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
View Brochure | Event Registration

HIPAA Privacy, Security, and Breach Rules will be addressed with an emphasis on patient access rights, and emerging issues in cyber security, devices and technology issues, social media considerations, and the enforcement and liability risks for HIPAA-covered entities and business associates. Recent case law and enforcement activities by the Office for Civil Rights will also be reviewed. The program includes strategies for maintaining continuous compliance, a discussion of necessary policies and procedures, and practical tips and solutions to address real-time situations.

MACRMI Simulation Training
Wednesday, January 15, 2020
9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Event Registration

The Massachusetts Alliance for Communication and Resolution following Medical Injury (MACRMI) will conduct its first simulation training for disclosure and apology as part of CHA's Communication and Resolution Program Collaborative.

The program is being presented as part of the Partnership for Patients HIIN educational series.

2020 Joint Commission Standards and National Patient Safety Goals Update
Wednesday, January 22, 2020
9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
View Brochure | Event Registration

Diana Scott, Senior Director of Accreditation, Vizient, will present CHA’s annual full-day program outlining The Joint Commission's (TJC) new standards and national patient safety goals for 2020, and challenges from 2019 with strategies for compliance. Ms. Scott will also review CMS focus areas, as well as best practices for a successful survey. Lisa DiBlasi Moorehead, The Joint Commission’s Associate Chief Nurse Executive, will provide an overview of the changes implemented by TJC. Attendees will also receive information on compliance data on challenging accreditation standards in Connecticut hospitals.