July Member Advocacy Update

2018-2019 State Budget; Health Care Funding Restored; and Other Priorities in Harrisburg

The General Assembly and Governor reached agreement early on this year’s state budget and code bills, making significant changes in some health care items. The $32.7 billion General Fund budget restores or increases funding to several programs PA-ACP supported.

Among these programs were the Governor’s proposed cuts of $10.75 million to GME programs through MA payments to academic centers and physician practice plans. Also restored was funding for diabetes, regional cancer institutes, biotech research, and ALS support services. PA-ACP supported and saw an increase in funding to Critical Access Hospitals of 44% to $10.4 million.

For the third year, the bills will attempt to transfer the JUA to the Insurance Department, which would then transfer $200 million of funds to the General Fund. PA-ACP will continue to oppose this action, which will again end up in court.

The Department of Health was not merged with the Department of Human Services.

LEGISLATION

Three PA-ACP priority bills were signed by the Governor, including SB 978 allowing disposal of unused prescription drugs by hospice or home health care services after death of a patient; SB 1142, creating the Safe2Say tipline for reporting potential threats in schools; and HB 2447 defining academic clinical research under the state medical marijuana program.

Other priority legislation:

HB 358 – exemption from liability for health care volunteers, is on the House voting calendar.

HB 1037 – sets a limit on punitive damages for assisted living and SNFs, was amended to create multiple exceptions then failed final passage, after much pressure from trial lawyers. Will be reconsidered in the fall.

HB 1800 – provides for synchronization of medical prescriptions. This passed the House unanimously, and is expected to get consideration by the Senate.

SB 25 – the CRNP scope of practice bill remains in the House Professional Licensure Committee after 2017 Senate passage. Amendments are expected this summer.

SB 780 – regulates telemedicine in PA, passed the Senate 49-0. In the House Professional Licensure Committee.

Opioids
HB 353 – requiring electronic prescriptions of Schedule II, III and IV controlled substances, was amended with our support adding exceptions, and passed the House 194-0.

HB 1987 – regulating the prescription and use of fentanyl. We secured amendments broadening use, and it passed the House 191-0.

SB 655 – creating a PA Safe and Effective Opioid Prescribing Advisory Council and promulgation of regulations. Passed the Senate 49-0.

SB 1001 – giving the Secretary of Health power to declare public health emergencies, passed the Senate 49-0.

Firearms

HB 1872 which would ban bump stock sales and trigger conversion devices remains on the House Calendar.

HB 2060 – requiring surrender of firearms within 48 hours when a PFA is placed against anyone. Combines three Senate Bills. Surprisingly this did not get final consideration before the recess when a major stakeholder group raised last minute questions.

HB 2227 – (Red Flag legislation) creates an extreme risk protective order for those deemed a threat to themselves and others, and prevents those from possession, use, manufacture, control, sale or transfer of firearms." The bill disappointingly remains in the House Rules Committee.