While the House Health Care Subcommittee sliced and diced the health care budget, good news came in the form of Speaker Chris Sprowls’ support of the expansion of Medicaid benefits for postpartum women.

SB 786 (Cruz) passed it’s first committee unanimously. The bill caps insulin costs at $100 per month by requiring individual and group health insurance policies and health maintenance organizations to provide coverage.

This week, SB 866 (Hooper), providing funds for the Moffitt Cancer Center, passed the Senate by a unanimous vote. The bill increases the share of cigarette tax revenues directed to the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute.

This week the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Chairs revealed Appropriations bills to be considered by the full Appropriations Committees next week. These initial bills are based on December revenue estimates, which do not consider recent higher monthly revenue reports, as well as the funds that will be provided through the American Rescue Plan.

Continued on page 2
House Proposes Medicaid Expansion for Postpartum Care

This week Speaker Chris Sprowls boosted the long-shot chance of extending the Medicaid coverage of postpartum Moms from 60 days to a year of health care benefits after delivery. Postpartum care includes services to assist with childbirth recovery, chronic condition management, family planning services and behavioral health care. This is an ongoing process that typically requires multiple health care visits and follow up care. Some studies indicate that at least one in ten women experience perinatal depression. Postpartum care is best delivered over a long duration, well beyond 60 days.

Currently, Medicaid postpartum care for 60-days has been the state’s policy for 30 years. The coverage funds more than 56% of Florida’s births. Originally, SB 238 (Book) and HB 645 (Brown) were filed to provide the expanded benefits. The issue is now included in an appropriations health care conforming bill, HB 5201, and will ultimately be part of negotiations over the budget in the conference process between the House Speaker and Senate President.

HB 5201 extends postpartum Medicaid-eligibility of pregnant women from 60 days following birth to 12 months following birth. The extension of full Medicaid benefits to postpartum women for 12 months will improve access to medical and behavioral health care and lead to better health outcomes. The extension of Medicaid postpartum eligibility for mothers to 12 months is estimated to cost $239.8 million ($93.0 million GR). Approximately 97,600 women will receive Medicaid coverage for the extended 12-month period.

(Appropriations Bills Continued)

“Tis but a scratch!”
~ Black Knight in Monty Python & the Holy Grail

Leaning on an argument that nonrecurring specified CARES Act funding showered institutions such as universities and hospitals with excess funds, the health care and higher education subcommittees released recurring cuts to the very institutions that provided stability, continuity and care during the pandemic. The Medicaid rolls swelled 20% to 4.5 million during the pandemic, necessitating increased funds and increased funds.

The FSU College of Medicine (FSU COM)--as well as other medical schools & universities--was hit with an “administrative efficiency” cut based on a formula in the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education budget. The FSU COM cut is $1,662,424 million, reducing the budget to $49,414,667 ($35,359,083 GR, $824,574 EETF, & $14,898,434 TF). The House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee did not take a similar cut, but did eliminate the State University Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program - $60 million, which medical schools have benefitted from for several years.

In the health care subcommittees, Medicaid hospital payments were slashed. The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health & Human Services eliminated the wholly IGT/trust funded Medicaid physician supplemental payment program - $5.5 million. Hospital rates were whacked by 7.5% optional Medicaid programs were terminated.

The House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee budget was reminiscent of the scene from the black knight in Monty Python and the Holy Grail. The subcommittee chair indicated there was a 73% cut to hospital exemption funds, and an 8.6% decrease in Medicaid hospital inpatient rates, as well as an 8.9% cut to Medicaid hospital outpatient rates. Optional Medicaid programs were also axed. Biomedical research funds are reduced by 20%. The bright spots in the House subcommittee budget were the Medicaid Postpartum Care extension to 12 months, and increases to the Alzheimer’s Disease Initiative and Community Care for the Elderly funds.

Next week the full Appropriations Committees will amend and pass the bills. (After the April revenue estimating conference, expect that there will be funds dumped into legislative priority areas.)
Legislation Containing Insulin Costs
Passes Committee

In Florida, every year about 105,000 people are diagnosed with diabetes—a disease in which the body’s ability to produce or respond to the hormone insulin for energy is impaired, resulting in abnormal metabolism and elevated levels of glucose. More than 13.1 percent of Florida’s adult population, or 2.4 million people, have diabetes. Insulin is the drug used to control blood sugar in diabetic patients. Without it, many patients would die. A study by JAMA Internal Medicine indicated the average list price of insulin nearly tripled between 2002 and 2013, and cost sharing, or out-of-pocket, costs per prescription doubled over a 10-year period.

SB 786 requires an individual or group health insurance policy that provides coverage for prescription insulin drugs to cap the total amount of cost sharing that an insured is required to pay for such drugs at an amount not to exceed $100 per 30-day supply, regardless of the amount or type of insulin needed to fill the prescription. It does not regulate the three pharmaceutical manufacturers of insulin: Eli Lilly, Novo Nordisk, and Sanofi. The bill passed the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee unanimously.

The House companion, HB 109 (Bell) has not been heard in committee yet.

Moffitt Cancer Center Legislation
Providing Bigger Funding Stream
Passes the Senate

Since 2001, a percentage share of the proceeds of the cigarette tax has been used to fund the growth and expansion of the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute in Tampa on the USF campus. Over the years, through legislative support, Moffitt has secured a distribution of cigarette tax revenue that is the greater of 4.04% of cigarette tax net collections each fiscal year or 4.04% of cigarette tax net collections in Fiscal Year 2001-2002, for a total of $383.7 million. Funds may be used for financing to pay for constructing, furnishing, equipping, operating, and maintaining cancer research and clinical and related facilities; furnishing, equipping, operating, and maintaining other leased or owned properties; and paying costs incurred in connection with purchasing, financing, operating, and maintaining such equipment, facilities, and properties. The financing includes issuing tax-exempt bonds—Moffitt has three series of bonds secured by cigarette tax revenue that are outstanding. The current authorization continues through June 30, 2053.

SB 866 (Hooper) increases the amount of cigarette tax net revenue collections that Moffitt receives. Beginning July 1, 2021, and continuing through June 30, 2024, the percentage is increased to 7%. Beginning July 1, 2024, and continuing through June 30, 2054, the percentage is further increased to 10%. The bill will increase Moffitt’s funds from $15.5 million annually to $26.9 million (an $11.4 million increase over the current year) from Fiscal Year 2021-2022 through Fiscal Year 2023-2024. Starting in Fiscal Year 2024-2025, the funds are estimated to be $38.4 million annually (a $22.9 million increase over the current year).

The House companion, HB 789 (Mariano), has not been heard in committee yet.

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The House companion, HB 789 (Mariano), has not been heard in committee yet.
COVID-19 Liability Bill Goes to the Governor

The House voted 83-31 to send CS/SB 72 (Brandes) to the Governor. The bill provides liability protection against COVID-19-related claims due to liability claims that may arise from the pandemic. The protections are extended to businesses, universities or other entities, including health care providers as long as they have made a good faith effort throughout the pandemic. People filing lawsuits would be required to prove that the business or health care providers’ actions were grossly negligent. They also will need to demonstrate gross negligence by the “clear and convincing” standard of evidence. Health care providers that substantially complied with authoritative or applicable government-issued health standards or guidance related to COVID-19 would have immunity. Critics argued that the bill shielded large corporate entities rather than patients and front-line workers.

Additional Resources:

Advocate for Florida State:
http://www.advocateforfloridastate.fsu.edu/site/PageServer?pagename=deploymenthome

FSU Governmental Relations:
http://govrel.fsu.edu/

The Florida Channel:
http://thefloridachannel.org/

Florida Senate: http://www.flsenate.gov/

Florida House of Representatives:
http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/

Florida Governor’s Office: http://www.flgov.com/

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Dog of the Week

Charlie

Charlie was lost/abandoned in Torreya State Park and found--scooped up and rescued--by FSU Women’s Tennis Coach Jennifer ‘Jen’ Hyde, who is in her 17th season at the helm of the Florida State Women’s Tennis program as FSU’s winningest women’s tennis coach. The team is currently on a winning streak and is ranked #6 in the nation.