Patients being discharged from the hospital often face difficulty getting their prescriptions, either logistically or otherwise. Bills would allow patients to take home a 48-hour supply of drugs rather than being limited to a 24-hour or less supply of drugs.

Continuing to identify and expand scope of practice for health care professions, a House subcommittee passed a bill to increase authority for CNAs & HHAs to give shots and meds. Conflict on the bill was over patient safety and standards of care versus the nursing and health care personnel shortage.

Each year there is a guardianship bill that tweaks the law. Last year stories out of Orlando concerning horrendous guardianship abuses by professional guardian Rebecca Fierle prompted action this session. She executed do-not-resuscitate orders her wards without permission, resulting in at least one untimely death.

“Our Senate budget also expands funding for resources for vulnerable Floridians, including increased funding for home and community-based services for Floridians with unique abilities, and a rate enhancement for the dedicated providers who serve Floridians living in nursing homes. We also include a meaningful investment in across-the-board salary increases for our hardworking state employees, as well as forward-looking investments in infrastructure that are critical to future security and economic growth.”

~ Senate President Bill Galvano

This week the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Chairs revealed Appropriations bills to be considered by the full Appropriations Committees next week.

Quote of the Week:
“You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.”
~ C.S. Lewis
Expanding Health Care Personnel Authority and Duties

Advocating for Florida’s Seniors, conflicting sides provided reasons for and against allowing certified nursing assistants (CNAs) or home health aides (HHAs) to perform additional health care nursing practices in testimony this week. The nursing home industry is the primary supporter of the bill.

**HB 7053** (Tomko & Health Market Reform Subcommittee) passed the House Health Market Reform Subcommittee by a vote of 10-5. The bill expands the authority of registered nurses to delegate any task to a certified nursing assistant (CNA) or home health aide (HHA) that the nurse determines that the CNA or HHA can safely perform. The bill also authorizes CNAs and HHAs to administer certain medications if the CNA or HHA has completed training required by the bill, and a physician or registered nurse has validated the CNA’s or HHA’s competency to perform medication administration.

The bill also expands the scope of practice for CNAs in nursing home facilities by authorizing CNAs to assist with preventative skin care and basic wound care when assisting with the application of topical medications and to assist with intermittent positive pressure breathing treatments and nebulizer treatments. The bill also authorizes a nursing home facility to use dining room assistants to meet minimum staffing requirements. Supporting the bill was the nursing home association, the Florida Health Care Association. Opposing the bill were the following organizations: LeadingAge Florida, Bon Secours St Petersburg Health System, SEIU and AARP Florida. The Senate companion bill, **SB 1676** (Albritton), will be considered in the Senate Health Policy Committee next week.

( Appropriations Bills Continued)

The proposed House and Senate Subcommittee budgets have very large differences, and are far lower than the Governor’s Recommendations. The Governor’s first proposed budget totaled $91.4 billion. The Senate Appropriations bill (SB 2500) is $92.8 billion and the House Appropriations bill (PCB APC – 01) is $91.3 billion.

On the one hand, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education Chair Kelli Stargel released the Senate higher education bill that provides funding for “National Ranking Operational Enhancement,” “Universities of Distinction,” and fully funds universities. On the other hand, House Appropriations Higher Education Subcommittee cut various universities’ recurring GR projects and carry forward funds. Thankfully, FSU was spared due to very careful management. In the House bill, there is no additional funding other than the initial $10 million for the Florida Institute for Child Welfare in the FSU College of Social Work. The **FSU College of Medicine is funded at $50,783,144 ($35,060,136 GR, $824,574 EETF, & $14,898,434 TF)** in the both the Senate and House appropriations bills.

There is also a wide gap ($613 million) between the House and Senate Health and Human Services Subcommittee budgets. Next week the full Appropriations committees in both chambers will consider the bills and the following week both chambers will consider the Appropriations bills.

**Senior Day at the Florida Capitol**

While Children’s Week unfolded at the Capitol, many came to support Senior Day. FSU College of Medicine ACTS 2 had an information booth in the chilly weather.
Guardianship Law Reforms Move Forward This Week

Private and public guardians are paid through their wards’ assets or by the state to make all legal, financial and medical decisions for incapacitated people. Without telling the court, Rebecca Fierle billed hospital company AdventHealth almost $4 million over a decade for services she provided to 682 patients and sometimes double-billed her wards for the same services.

CS/SB 994 (Passidomo) revises the guardianship statutes to ensure that a ward’s personal and property interests are carefully protected by and from a guardian. The bill requires guardians to obtain court approval before consenting to or obtaining an order not to resuscitate a ward, and requires a court to issue a determination within 72 hours after a verified petition is filed. It also provides conflict of interest provisions, specifies annual guardianship plans, prohibits guardian commissions, requires a court to rule within 72 hours after a petition is filed to obtain a do-not-resuscitate order, disclosures of certain background information and whether a less restrictive arrangement, other than a guardianship, could meet the needs of the ward. The bill is now in the Senate Rules Committee.

The companion bill, CS/HB 709 (Burton) passed the House Health & Human Services Committee and is ready for full House consideration.

Hospital Discharge Expanded Prescriptions

SB 100 (Harrell) expands the authorization to prescribe and dispense medicinal drugs in hospital settings, such as emergency departments. The bill permits an individual licensed to prescribe medicinal drugs to dispense up to a 48-hour supply, rather than 24-hour supply, of medicinal drugs to any patient of, or patient discharged from, a hospital emergency department that operates a Class II or Class III institutional pharmacy, provided that the emergency department physician treating the patient, or a physician treating a discharged patient, determines that: 1) the medicinal drug is warranted; and 2) community pharmacy services are not readily accessible to the patient, geographically or otherwise. The bill also authorizes individuals licensed to prescribe medicinal drugs to dispense a 72-hour supply, rather than a 48-hour supply, during a declared state of emergency in the area, under certain conditions. It will be considered next week in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The House companion bill, HB 57 (Willhite) allows all prescribers, not just physicians, to prescribe and hospital pharmacies to dispense a limited supply of medicinal drugs when community pharmacy services are unavailable. The bill is in the last committee of reference, the Health and Human Services Committee.

What Happened this Week to Benefit UNIVERSITY Employees?

Sadly, the 3% State employee raise in the Senate Appropriations bill does not include State university employees. Probably the best news is that the Senate and House Appropriations bills ensure that the increase in the cost of state employee health insurance is fully funded, keeping insurance coverage costs the same. The increase in the real cost of health insurance this year is approximately $640 for an individual and $1,440 for family coverage. Also, this week SB 7046 by the Senate Governmental Oversight & Accountability Committee passed. The bill repeals a 2017 law that required four different benefit plans to be offered to state employees, which could have been very costly. It prohibits pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) working on behalf of the state from substituting “their judgment over the judgment of the prescriber regarding whether a prescription drug is medically necessary” for treatment of a patient.
Maclay Gardens State Park

Alfred Maclay was a wealthy banker and financier from New York. He visited Tallahassee with his wife, Louise Fleischmann Maclay, in 1923 and was impressed by the huge oaks and pines, beautiful dogwoods and hollies. He decided this would be the place to fulfill his lifelong dream of creating a beautiful garden, and this would be their winter home. Over the years they established one of the most beautiful ornamental gardens in Florida. In 1953, nine years after Mr. Maclay’s death, Mrs. Maclay and her children donated the gardens to the state of Florida. She expressed her wishes that the gardens always be maintained as a memorial to her husband and his creation, and opened to the public for the enjoyment of the people of Florida and guests. Peak blooming season is from January 1 through April 30, with the floral peak in mid-to-late March.

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

Rocky the Cavapoo – son of Dr. Jessica Pryce, Director of the Florida Institute for Child Welfare, Florida State University