

Legislative Report #2, January 26, 2014

Tax credits for primary care community-based faculty members – Legislation will be introduced this week in the House that would provide tax credits for primary care community-based faculty members who host 3rd- and 4th-year Georgia medical students, physician assistant students, and nurse practitioner students in their practices for required training. It is imperative that the training of these students be secured in communities across the state, as these three disciplines form the core primary care workforce. Estimates show such a tax credit would cause a minuscule loss of revenue to the state, but would have a major impact on the primary care workforce available to our rural citizens. The legislation will be sponsored by State Representative Ben Harbin (R-Augusta).

This is one of the recommendations of the 2013 Primary Care Summit. An op-ed by Denise Kornegay, Executive Director of the Statewide AHEC Program, and Matt Caseman, Executive Director of the Georgia Rural Health Association, was published last week. [Read more.](#)

State Budget – HB 743, the state's FY 2014 Amended budget passed the House 163-1 on Friday, January 24th. The \$20.2 billion budget is a revised spending plan for the current fiscal year ends July 1st. It raises spending by \$300 million and includes funds for increased school enrolment and extra monies for child protection services. Other increases would be directed to the Department of Economic Development to help disburse OneGeorgia development grants and to the Department of Community Health for Medicaid reimbursements. The spending is now in the Senate for consideration.

[Amended FY 2014 Budget Tracking Document](#)

[FY 2015 State Budget Tracking Document](#)

[SB 291](#) - would move the Division of Aging Services out of the Department of Human Services and create a separate agency – passed the Senate Health and Human Services Committee

[SB 292](#) - would launch a registry of Georgians with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, tracking their prevalence in the state – passed out of Senate Health and Human Service Committee

[SB 273](#) - would require the Department of Public Health to establish a committee to review maternal deaths and to report on their causes – passed out of Senate Health and Human Service Committee.

Rural Provider Tax Credit - According to State Senator Tim Golden (R-Valdosta), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Sub-Committee on Community Health, Rural Georgians benefit from physicians taking advantage of the Rural Provider Tax Credit.

Statistics released this week by the Georgia Department of Revenue indicate that more than 140 Georgia physicians are taking advantage of a \$5,000 tax cut each year for practicing medicine in rural communities.

This is a positive result from enactment of the Physician Shortage Act, which Senator Golden introduced in 1996 to encourage doctors to locate in rural areas that were increasingly underserved by healthcare professionals.

The Revenue Department reported that in 2012, a total of 149 physicians with rural practices utilized the tax credit totaling \$674,762. The previous year, 142 physicians used the tax credit totaling \$633,755.

Under the law, physicians must practice in a rural county and live in that county or a neighboring county to qualify for the tax credit. The physician must primarily admit patients to a rural hospital and must practice in the fields of family practice, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, internal medicine or general surgery. The tax credit may be claimed, under those conditions, for up to five years.

The General Assembly will reconvene on January 27th for the 10th legislative day.

Articles of Interest

Posted: 8:30 am Thursday, January 23rd, 2014

Oops. Closing rural hospitals would be ‘unthinkable,’ state lawmaker now says

Our AJC colleague Aaron Gould Sheinin opens your day with this significant bit of hard news:

State Rep. Sharon Cooper, R-Marietta, said Wednesday that closing rural hospitals is an “unthinkable proposition” — two days after telling an Atlanta radio station that some rural hospitals “need to close.”

The chairman of the Health and Human Services Committee, Cooper told the AJC that closing hospitals “would have serious consequences on the affected community, hurting it economically and limiting access to acute care for Georgians.”

[Read more](#)

Posted: 2:28 pm Thursday, January 23rd, 2014

Nathan Deal is having second thoughts about new health insurance plan

By Greg Bluestein

Gov. Nathan Deal is trying to soothe the unrest over his administration’s controversial decision to go with a single insurer to manage health care for 650,000 public employees and their families.

Deal brushed aside the push by state Superintendent John Barge, one of his GOP challengers, for an investigation into how Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Georgia was awarded the lucrative contract. He called it a hollow “political shot” in an interview Thursday.

But what he said next was more important:

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