

## MINUTES

### SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE, AND LABOR

**Tuesday, September 7, 2021**

**1:00 PM**

**Room A, MAC**

**Little Rock, Arkansas**

Committee members present: Senators Cecile Bledsoe, Chair; Ben Gilmore, Kim Hammer, Dan Sullivan, and David Wallace; Representatives Jack Ladyman, Chair; Mary Bentley, Justin Boyd, Bruce Coleman, Jim Dotson, Jon Eubanks, Justin Gonzales, Steve Magie, John Payton, Mark Perry, Aaron Pilkington, Jeff Wardlaw, and Carlton Wing

Other members present: Senators Bob Ballinger, Alan Clark and Jason Rapert; Representatives Stan Berry, Cameron Cooper, Denis Ennett, Brian Evans, Vivian Flowers, Johnny Rye, Steve Hollowell, Keith Slape, and Dwight Tosh

Senator Bledsoe called the meeting to order.

#### **Approval of Minutes for the August 2, 2021, Meeting [Exhibit C]**

Representative Pilkington made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Senator Sullivan, and the motion carried.

#### **Covid-19 Update and Current Vaccination Rates [Handout 1] [Handout 2] [Handout 3] [Handout 4]**

Julie Holt, Administrator, Policy Analysis and Research, Bureau of Legislative Research; Jennifer Dillaha, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Arkansas Department of Health (ADH); Joe Thompson, MD, MPH, Director, Arkansas Center for Health Improvement; Bo Ryall, President, CEO, Arkansas Hospital Association (AHA); and Jodiane Tritt, Executive Vice President, AHA; provided an update on Covid-19, vaccination rates, infection rates, and current hospital bed capacity. Mask requirements in relation to school districts was also discussed.

#### **Medical Marijuana Quality Control**

Clay Bullard, President, PGxMedical, discussed efforts within the state of Oklahoma to ensure quality control on medical marijuana being distributed within the state's borders. Brandon Thornton, Co-Owner, CEO, Steep Hill Arkansas, stated efforts being made in Arkansas to ensure quality in order to compare efforts in Oklahoma and Arkansas.

#### **Update from the State Insurance Department [Exhibit F1] [Exhibit F2]**

Booth Rand, JD, Managing Attorney, Arkansas Insurance Department; and Beth Barrington, Pharmacy Benefits Manager, Arkansas Insurance Department; provided information regarding the department's regulatory and enforcement authority concerning pharmacy benefit managers as defined in Act 994 of 2019.

#### **Update on Unemployment Insurance Program**

Charisse Childers, PhD, Director, Division of Workforce Services, Department of Commerce; and Jim Hudson, JD, General Counsel, Deputy Director of Strategy & Operations, Department of Commerce; provided an update on Arkansas unemployment rates as well as adjudication and appeals.

#### **Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of County Operations, Review of Rule [Exhibit H]**

Mark White, Chief of Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Chief of Staff, DHS; and Mary Franklin, Director of County Operations, DHS; stated that the rule outlined the factors that are used to determine the eligibility of newborns who are guaranteed Medicaid coverage for the first year of life regardless of income changes.

Senator Bledsoe stated that without objection, the rule stands as reviewed.

**DHS, Division of County Operations, Review of Rule [Exhibit I]**

Mark White, Chief of Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Chief of Staff, DHS; and Mary Franklin, Director of County Operations, DHS; discussed changes that would adjust sponsor deeming instructions regarding income and resources. Household size is counted according to modified adjusted gross income or supplemental security rules.

Senator Bledsoe stated that without objection, the rule stands as reviewed.

**DHS, Division of Medical Services, Review of Rule [Exhibit J]**

Mark White, Chief of Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Chief of Staff, DHS; David Jones, Assistant Director, Division of Medical Services, DHS; provided information regarding updates to the Physician Manual in order to clarify billing instructions when filing papers or electronic claims for anesthesia services.

Senator Bledsoe stated that without objection, the rule stands as reviewed.

**DHS, Division of Medical Services, Review of Rule [Exhibit K]**

DHS requested Exhibit K be pulled down for consideration at a future meeting.

**DHS, Division of Medical Services, Review of Rule [Exhibit L]**

Mark White, Chief of Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs Officer, Chief of Staff, DHS; and Jay Hill, Director, Division of Aging Adult and Behavioral Health Services, DHS; presented information regarding the renewal of AR Choices in Homecare.

Senator Bledsoe stated that without objection, the rule stands as reviewed.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.