



Legislative Update

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OVERVIEW

Based upon January's Revenue Estimating Conference and continued updates from the House and Senate Fiscal Agency, Michigan's revenue outlook is rosy. So much so that both the Governor and the Republican majority in the Legislature are talking about significant investments in infrastructure and access to behavioral health. At the same time, the Whitmer Administration and Republican leadership are talking about significant tax cuts, albeit with much different emphasis. The Governor has proposed an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and an elimination of the tax on pensions enacted during the Snyder Administration. On the other hand, House and Senate Republicans propose to roll back the State individual income tax to the 2008 level from 4.35 percent to 3.9 percent. In addition, the GOP proposes to scale back the corporate income tax from 6 percent to 3.9 percent as well. Legislative leaders will work through the spring in order to enact a budget by the middle of June. Thereafter, legislators that are eligible to run again will be concentrating on their primary election for newly drawn districts in August.

LEGISLATION

Nurses Seek to Practice Radiology:

SB 680, sponsored by Sen. Rick Outman, (R-Six Lakes) would establish the category of "certified nurse practitioners" (CNP) in statute and would greatly expand their scope of practice. The bill allows a CNP to determine a diagnosis, which is, in essence, the practice of medicine. The bill also allows CNPs to prescribe pharmacological and non-pharmacological "interventions and treatments" that are within their specialty role. Finally, the bill allows CNPs to supervise others and to order, perform, supervise and interpret laboratory and imaging studies. Clearly, this is the practice of medicine and radiology.

MRS will be working with MSMS to defeat this bill. I will be heading up an initial grassroots effort as an initial step. I have forwarded talking points to the Legislature Committee for its review and will be sending them to the membership. While this bill just recently introduced, and is still with the Senate Health Policy and Human Services Committee, it is "all hands on deck" for this one.

Prior Authorization:

Last year, Sen. Curt VanderWall (R-Ludington), the Chair of the Senate Health Policy Committee, introduced legislation calling for procedures and protocols to be established before the use of prior authorization by insurance companies. MRS has been a member of the "Health Can't Wait" coalition, which has been advocating prior authorization reform. Unfortunately, major insurers such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield were successful in amending last session's version of the legislation to the point where even the Coalition opposed its passage. Consequently, the bill died at the end of session. In March, Sen. VanderWall introduced SB 247, a revised version of last session's bill. While SB 247 is not as strong as last session's bill as originally introduced, it is still supported by the Coalition. SB 247 has unanimously passed the Senate and was sent to the House. At long last, SB 247 will receive a hearing before the House Health Policy Committee this week. It is anticipated the House will take action on the bill by the end of this month.

Upgrade Standards for Radiographic Technologists:

HB 5116, sponsored by Rep. Rodney Wakeman (R-Saginaw) establishes education and training standards for those who operate sophisticated imaging equipment. Currently, Michigan is an outlier among states, mandating requirements for only mammography and CT operation. MRS is supportive but has suggestions as to how to make the bill stronger. The legislation is with the House Health Policy Committee and has received it's first hearing. Another hearing on the bill is expected prior to the legislature's spring break in late March.

Essential Health Provider Legislation:

SB 246, sponsored by Sen. VanderWall, would increase the debt limit the State would pay for an individual who has taken part in the essential health provider repayment program from \$200,000 to \$300,000 over a ten-year period. SB 435, sponsored by Sen. Michael MacDonald (R-Macomb), expands the list of health care professions that would qualify for the program to include behavioral sciences. These bills have passed the Senate, been reported out of House Committee and are now on the floor of the House awaiting passage.

REGULATORY

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Certificate of Need Commissions is scheduled for March 17 at the February 17 meeting of the MRI Workgroup, a draft of revised standards were submitted. Please contact me if you would like a copy of the same.

