

FACHC Legislative Update  
March 28, 2008

Both chambers of the Florida Legislature have published their initial drafts on the 2008-09 FY Budget. The various House and Senate Budget Committees that develop budgets for all sectors of government will continue to grind out a product that agrees upon a common expenditure total, and then a “conference committee” will then hammer out most issues, with any remaining discrepancies to be agreed upon and finalized by the Speaker of the House, Marco Rubio of Miami and the President of the Senate, Ken Pruitt of Pt. St. Lucie.

Due to a slowing economy and no coming increases in state taxes, the Senate and House documents detailed numerous substantial cuts and reductions to dozen of programs at the Agency for Health Care Administration, the Department of Health, Elder Affairs, Agency for Person With Disabilities and Department of Children and Families. In fact, it has been an exercise in major reductions at every agency of state government.

The Low Income Pool (LIP) distribution proposal has yet to be released by either chamber. How the budget situation impacts FQHCs and Low Income Pool is yet to be determined. Healthcare budget committees will continue their work and FACHC is working with committee leaders to present the strongest case for continued support for community health centers. An important note: according to budget spreadsheets released so far, both the House and Senate are fully funding the Low Income Pool and the LIP total will again be \$1Billion.

The Florida Senate Health and Human Services (HHS) Appropriations Committee has released its first draft of the healthcare budget on Tuesday. The initial draft, in terms of issues relating to FQHCs, directed that \$1.5 Million in General Revenue dollars were to be eliminated in a specific appropriation at the Department of Health. These dollars have served as the seed money for the State Expansion Grant Program for health centers, which, after local matching funds, and state dollars, bring a total of \$4 Million in federal match to FQHCs in Florida that increase service capacity or add new services. (\$7.3M total) This program has been a boon to health centers and greatly assisted numerous health centers in expanding access to care to thousands across the state. FACHC is meeting with Senate HHS Appropriations committee members to reinstate those funds.

FACHC is dealing with budget cuts that impact health centers due to freezes in reimbursement for Medicaid services in every field of health care services. Virtually all legislative member projects that have been funded in recent years have been eliminated. The Senate HHS Committee will issue revised budget documents early next week.

The Florida House Health Care Council also released its first draft of the health care budget on Thursday. The House did not provide a draft of proviso language as the Senate. The House Council issued a document that contained largely “rolled-up” items that were nearly impossible to decipher what specific budget items consisted within the budget cuts. FACHC dug deeply and found the details that listed the recommended cuts at the Department of Health. That document did not list an elimination of the Expansion Grant Program at DOH, but it did identify the elimination of the member projects. It is not certain that the Expansion Grant item is not in danger because the House did not give any indication of cuts to items funded in current year proviso language. The House Health Care Council will issue more detailed data early next week.

FACHC has demonstrated to legislators how effective FQHCs have been in utilizing LIP funds to expand access to care, but your legislators need to hear from their local FQHC CEOs, Board Members and patients. Health centers are an integral part of the state healthcare safety-net, but you can never remind the decision-makers of that too often. If you have an issue that you or your health center supports or opposes, contact your elected official's office and let them know. If you have questions about legislative proposals that are in play, contact FACHC.

**REMINDER:** FACHC legislative priorities can be found on the [FACHC Legislative Affairs News Page](#).

In terms of substantive (non-budget related) legislation, FACHC is tracking more than 100 bills. Many bills are not looking good to progress through the process due to not getting on the agenda for a committee reference. Keep in mind that one way to kill a bill is to give it more than two or three committee references and it not making through all the process before the 60 day session ends. Below is a slate of some bills that FACHC is tracking. These are bills that either directly or indirectly impact community health centers.

**HB 19** by Rep. Homan – relating to coverage for mental, nervous & substance abuse disorder [in HC Council](#)

**Note:** Senate companion **SB 164** by Sen Crist [thru Health Policy... in Gen Gov Approp](#)

**SB 130** by Sen. Wilson – relating to School-based Health Centers

**Note:** **no House companion**

**HB 461** by Rep. Patronis – relating to Health Flex Plans [on Second Reading in House](#)

**Note:** Senate companion **SB 1022** by Sen. Peaden [on Senate calendar](#)

**HB 515** by Rep. Zapata – relating to Health Care in Medically Underserved Area **has not moved**

**Note:** Senate companion SB 972 by Sen. Saunders **has not moved**

**HB 637** by Rep. Grimsley – relating to Electronic Health Records [thru Council to House floor](#)

**Note:** Senate companion SB 1998 by Sen. Ring **has not moved**

**HB 691** by Rep. Zapata – relating to Medicaid Recipients with Psych Disabilities [thru Health Innov... now in HC Council](#)

**Note:** related to **SB 846** by Sen. Rich - relating to Medicaid Recipients with Psych Disabilities [thru Health Policy... 2 more references](#)

**HB 859** by Rep. Cusack – relating to Medicaid Managed Care Plans **has not moved**

**Note:** related to **SB 1566** by Sen. Lynn [thru Health Policy... 3 more references](#)

**SB 1012** by Sen. Gaetz – relating to Health insurance claims [thru Health Reg... has 2 more references](#)

**Note:** **SB 405** by Rep. Galvano – relating to Health insurance claims [thru Health Innov and now in HC Council](#)

**HB 1429** by Rep. Gardiner – relating to substance abuse and mental health services [thru Healthy Families... 2 more references](#)

**Note:** related to **SB 2626** by Sen. Storms **has not moved**

**HB 1437** by Rep. Zapata – relating to access to care [thru Healthy Families... 2 more references](#)

**Note:** related to **SB 2316** by Sen. Wilson – relating to access to care **has not moved – [has 5 references](#)**

**SB 1488** by Sen. Dean – relating to Health Care Consumer's Right to Information Act [thru Health Reg... 2 more references](#)

**Note: HB 1435** by Rep. Zapata – relating to Health Care Consumer's Right to Information Act **has not moved**

**SB 1508** by Sen. Saunders – relating to Medicaid Managed Care Programs [thru Health Reg... 2 more references](#)

**Note: HB 1411** by Rep. Grimsley – relating to Medicaid Managed Care Programs **has not moved**

**SB 2760** by Sen. Peaden – relating to dentistry [thru Health Reg... now in HHS Approp](#)

**Note: SB 1367** by Rep. Jordan – relating to dentistry **has not moved**

FACHC will pursue a strong effort of health center supporters to communicate how elected officials can help us reach our objective of expanding care to more residents of Florida. We urge FQHC supporters to make regular visit to FACHC's Legislative webpage to keep abreast of the latest news... this will be your portal for up-to-date information on what we are working. Phone calls, faxes and emails are needed *from supporters* to help us achieve our goals. Please contact Travis Coker – [tcoker@fachc.org](mailto:tcoker@fachc.org) if you have questions or wish to provide a grassroots contact for your health center.

There are a number of legislative proposals not yet released in bill form that may be in play, as well as bills filed that can affect health centers, their staff or patients. FACHC will strive to keep you aware of what is afoot in Tallahassee in the next eight weeks. If you hear or read of something that may be of concern, please contact FACHC and let's work on it together.

To view any legislative bill of either chamber... go to ... <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/>

## In WASHINGTON, DC news:

Mr. Andy Behrman, President and CEO of FACHC, continues to provide testimony to Congressional Committees in Washington. He will next appear before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs in an April 21<sup>st</sup> hearing on the value that community health centers can bring to the VA health system. He will present to the Committee on Veterans Affairs on the cost benefits associated with the VA contracting with FQHCs as compared with the costs associated of building new facilities where it is not necessary.

In President Bush's FY2009 Budget Request, it contained a \$26.8 million increase for Community Health Centers, a program supporting a nationwide network of more than 1,100 organizations providing affordable, accessible primary care services to 17 million patients in 6,000 sites nationwide. The appropriation support effort needs local support in Congress to become a reality. The "Dear Colleague" letters are now available for health center advocates to send to your congressional representative and senator to ask for their support.

Both letters request for a \$248 million increase for community health centers. **Please ask your member to sign on today. Please notify Travis Coker when you make a request for congressional support.** FACHC will follow up upon your request.

Health center advocates need to send the “Dear Colleague” letter to their member of congress and request them to sign onto the effort to increase funding to health centers by \$248 million. The letters can also be found on the FACHC Legislative web page.

As of March 24, 2008, members of the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida who have signed the Pallone-Deal letter include: **Rep. Gus Bilirakis, Rep. Tim Mahoney, Rep. Alcee Hastings, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Rep. Ron Klein and Rep. Ric Keller**. Currently, there are 189 signees of the Pallone-Deal letter. A number of Florida congressional members committed to sign onto or support the level of funding, so we can expect that number to increase. FACHC will update the list as they become official. **If your representative is not on this list call their office today and request the representative to co-sign the Deal-Pallone letter!**

At this time, **Sen. Bill Nelson** has signed the Bond-Stabenow letter. Currently, there are 47 signees of the Bond-Stabenow letter. Sen. Mel Martinez has not.

Current Co-Sponsors of HR 1343, Florida representatives include: **Rep. Robert Wexler, Rep. Adam Putnam, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Rep. Gus Bilirakis and Rep. Kendrick Meek**. **If your representative is not on this list call their office today and request their co-sponsorship of HR 1343!**

Current Co-Sponsors of S 901 includes **Senator Bill Nelson**. At FACHC’s visit with Sen. Mel Martinez’s staff in DC, his staffer stated that Sen. Martinez would join as a co-sponsor. His office needs to hear from health center advocates in Florida. **Contact Sen. Martinez at (202) 224-3041 and ask him to co-sponsor S. 901!**

To view federal bills of interest visit: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>