



DAILY BRIEF

From April 17, 2013

Health Care

In the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, **AIF's General Counsel, Tamela Perdue**, testified in support of SB 1816, *Relating to Health Care*, by Senator Joe Negron (R-Palm City). The bill establishes a state premium assistance program, called Healthy Florida, for uninsured, low income Floridians to receive assistance in purchasing private health insurance coverage. Further, health reimbursement accounts (HRAs) would be used to encourage healthy behavior. Also, the program would use the Florida Healthy Kids Corporation (FHK) to administer the program. Currently, FHK offers insurance to children in low income families from birth to age 18 who are not eligible for Medicaid through private insurers.



The proposal would require the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to submit a state plan amendment to the federal government for permission to use current federal Medicaid dollars to fund this new program.

In testimony, AIF's Tammy Perdue said that SB 1816 tackles the issue of expanding access to affordable health services. Perdue said that AIF brought together stakeholders affected by rising health care costs and the rising number of uninsured in order to find a resolution. She went on to say that paying for the care of Florida's uninsured population represents a \$1.3 billion burden on the business community and she urged the committee to support the proposal which would lessen the costs borne by our businesses which will ultimately enhance the state's economic health.

In committee, Sen. Negron also gave a nod to the House's proposal (PPACA03-13) which was approved in the House Select Committee on PPACA on Monday by saying the two plans could be merged to provide additional choices for coverage. The House plan would create a program called the Florida Health Choices Plus Program to provide \$2000 dollars to parents and Social Security Income (SSI) eligible disabled adults with incomes under 100% of FPL who are not eligible for Medicaid. The person would be required to contribute \$25 a month and combine it with the state funding to purchase private health insurance coverage through an online purchasing portal administered by Florida Health Choices. The House plan only uses state General Revenue dollars to fund the program which is estimated to cost just over \$18 million in FY 2013-2014.

Sen. Negron said the merged plan would give low income persons two choices for gaining private coverage – enrolling in the premium assistance program and receiving coverage through FHK (Senate) or accepting the \$2,000 funding and purchasing coverage through the (FHC) website (House).

The Committee also discussed SB 1844, *Relating to Health Choice Plus Program*, by Senator Aaron Bean (R-Jacksonville). The bill takes a more limited approach to providing coverage to uninsured, low income Floridians by focusing on those at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Persons in the program would contribute \$20 per month and combine it with the state contribution of \$10 a month to purchase health care services through the FHC website.

In addition to insurance and HMO products, the following services could be purchased from these entities: prepaid health clinics, health care providers, including hospitals and other licensed health facilities, health care clinics, group professional practices, provider service networks and professional associations. The estimated cost for funding the first year of this program is \$15 million from the General Revenue Fund. The plan would not use any federal dollars.

SB 1844 passed by a vote of 6-4 and will next be heard in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AIF continues to urge the Legislature to develop a comprehensive plan that provides health care coverage to Floridians in a manner that alleviates the inordinate financial burden Florida's employers currently shoulder to cover the cost of care for the uninsured.

In the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, AIF stood in support SB 844, *Relating to Medicaid Fraud*, by Senator Denise Grimsley (R-Sebring). The bill would increase accountability in the state's Medicaid program by:

- Lengthening the time medical and Medicaid-related records are kept;
- Authorizing the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to perform onsite inspections of a service location of a provider who has applied to become a Medicaid provider; and
- Expanding the list of offenses for which AHCA may terminate a provider's participation in the Medicaid program.

The bill passed unanimously and will next be heard in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AIF supports passage of legislation that would lessen incidences of fraud within the state's Medicaid program which could lower the amount by which Florida employers subsidize that program.

The House passed HB 671, *Relating to Pharmacy Technicians*, by Representative Travis Hutson (R-Palm Coast). The bill would increase the number of registered pharmacy technicians a licensed pharmacist may supervise to six. Current law prohibits a licensed pharmacist from supervising more than one registered pharmacy technician, unless the Department of Health's (DOH) Board of Pharmacy (Board) determines the pharmacy meets certain guidelines and provides authorization to supervise.

The bill passed by a vote of 101- 16 and will next be heard by the Senate.

The Senate companion bill, SB 818 by Senator Rene Garcia (R-Hialeah) still has two committee stops before it can be heard by the full Senate.

AIF supports expanding the scope of practice for health care professionals in order to increase access to services and lower the cost of care.

Manufacturing

In today's meeting of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development, AIF stood in support of SB 582, *Relating to Manufacturing Development*, by Senator Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton). The bill is a top priority for the AIF Manufacturing, Aerospace and Defense Council and, when enacted, it will be referred to as "The "Manufacturing Competitiveness Act."

The legislation authorizes local governments to voluntarily adopt, by ordinance, a Local Manufacturing Development Program that would allow manufacturers to obtain master plan approval for manufacturing sites. The agreed upon master plan would set outer limits on the site that would remain applicable over term of the master plan. Once the master plan is approved, the manufacturer would not need further local approval for future expansions or modifications (except for building code, life, or safety issues).

Manufacturers residing in participating counties will also have access to a coordinated permitting process at the state level for the most common state permits. The bill also enables participating local governments to be self-identified as having a particular interest in having manufacturing facilities in their jurisdictions. Enterprise Florida can use this information when recruiting and placing manufacturing facilities. In essence this creates some level of competition among counties for new manufacturing facilities.

Florida is among the bottom five states in the nation as a percentage of manufacturing gross state product output. The sector is a significant job creator with salaries well beyond the state average and with an every direct manufacturing job creating about three indirect jobs, the highest of any employment sector.

The bill passed without opposition and will next be heard in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

Later in the day, the House companion bill, HB 357 by Representative Jim Boyd (R-Bradenton) was read for a third time and passed by a vote of 116-1. The two bills will now meet over in the Senate where they will be heard before final passage and approval by the Governor.

AIF supports these good bills because both will improve the development approval process for Florida's manufacturers.

Business Regulation

During the House Appropriations Committee, AIF stood in support of HB 85, *Relating to Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)*, by Representative Greg Steube (R-Sarasota). HB 85 creates an alternative procurement process and requirements for public-private partnerships, and creates a Public Facilities and Infrastructure Act Guidelines Task Force which would provide guidance on how to implement public-private partnerships to foster uniformity across the state. The bill also authorizes the use of public-private partnerships for purposes of county transportation facilities.

The bill passed by a vote of 24-1 and will next be heard in the House State Affairs Committee. The Senate version of the bill, SB 84 by Senator Miguel Diaz de la Portilla (R-Miami) is currently in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AIF supports HB 85 and the sponsor's intention to encourage private sector investment into local infrastructure projects across the state. Public Private Partnerships have proven successful in aiding government needs for infrastructure project advancement utilizing private contractors, financiers and related industries.

Insurance

In the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government, AIF stood in support of SB 242, *Relating to Interstate Insurance Product Regulation Compact*, by Senator Dorothy Hukill (R-Port Orange). The bill enacts into Florida law, the Interstate Insurance Product Regulation Compact (the Compact); a model legislation adopted by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. The Compact provides for the development of uniform national standards for life insurance, annuity, disability income insurance, and long-term care products (including rate filings for the latter two insurance products) and application of these standards to insurer filings.

The bill passed unopposed and will next be heard in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

Later in the day, the House unanimously passed the House companion bill, HB 383 by Representative Matt Hudson (R-Naples).

AIF supports legislation allowing insurers to submit a single filing to the Commission rather than making separate filing in each state in which they are authorized to do business.

The House unanimously passed HB 341, *Relating to Uninsured Motorist Insurance Coverage* by Representative Clay Ingram (R-Pensacola). The bill reverses a recent court decision which deleted the option for the purchaser of an automobile insurance policy to sign a waiver of rights to combine policy limits from multiple vehicles for uninsured motorists (UM) coverage. By restoring this option, the bill allows businesses and other purchasers of UM coverage who exercise this option to save 20% or more in premiums.

AIF supports the passage of legislation improving the regulatory environment for insurers and reducing the cost of insurance to businesses.

Taxation

In the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Finance and Tax, AIF stood in support of SB 916, *Relating to Tax on Sales, Use, and Other Transactions*, by Senator Anitere Flores (R-Miami). Sen. Flores explained that the bill provides an exemption from state and local sales tax during the 3-day period beginning at 12:01 a.m. on August 2, 2013, through 11:59 p.m. on August 4, 2013, on purchases of clothing costing \$75 or less per item, school supplies costing \$15 or less per item, and computers costing \$750 or less per item.

With two friendly amendments, the bill passed unanimously and will next be heard in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AIF supports the sales tax holiday as it helps Florida businesses by stimulating sales while also helping Florida families with school age children.

Energy

The House unanimously passed HB 579, *Relating to Natural Gas Motor Fuel*, by Representative Lake Ray (R-Jacksonville). HB 579 would replace the annual decal and fee system with a motor fuel equivalent gallon form of taxation beginning January 1, 2019. The bill would further require anyone selling natural gas fuel in Florida to obtain a natural gas retailer license from the Department of Revenue. There are currently 32 natural gas fueling stations in Florida and with the development in the United States of proved reserves of natural gas, the potential for a less expensive and cleaner alternative to other motor fuels is expanded in this legislation.

AIF supports any efforts by the Legislature to provide Florida's businesses with a less expensive and cleaner alternative motor fuel and will continue to monitor this legislation.

Environment & Agriculture

During the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government, AIF stood in support of SB 1684, *Relating to Environmental Regulation*, by Senator Thad Altman (R-Melbourne). The bill is the major regulation reform bill of the Session. It amends & revises numerous provisions relating to development permit applications; marinas, boat yards, general permits for special events, well permits, and agriculture water supply demand projections.

An amendment introduced by Senator Altman took out the water planning portion of the bill as another bill has the same provisions. Another friendly amendment by Senator Wilton Simpson (R-New Port Richey), added a provision regarding Everglades land leases.

The bill passed as amended without opposition and will next be heard in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AIF supports Senator Altman's effort to help streamline the permitting process for Florida's businesses.

Education

During the House Appropriations Committee, AIF stood in support of HB 7165 by Chair Marlene O' Toole (R-Lady Lake). The bill focuses on three items: governance of the Office of Early Learning, accountability for Early Learning Coalitions, the Office of Early Learning and providers across the state, and transparency in spending for all three regarding the use of public funds. Currently, Chairman O'Toole's bill would place the Office of Early Learning within the Department of Education (DOE), while granting autonomy from much of the DOE oversight structure. The bill also establishes statute roles and responsibilities for the Office of Early Learning, Early Learning Coalitions and program providers, which were previously left to the Office in rulemaking authority. The bill also phases in spending caps and restrictions for Coalitions across the state.

HB 7165 passed unopposed and is now ready to be heard by the full House.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education passed SB 1722, *Relating to Early Learning*, by Senator John Legg (R-Lutz). The bill's main provisions mirror many aspects of HB 7165, with two significant differences. First, the Senate bill would place the Office of Early Learning within the Office of School Choice at the DOE. Second, the Senate bill would take a revised approach to spending caps and restrictions for Coalitions.

The bill also passed unanimously and will next be heard in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

AIF supports early learning programs as they are essential to providing support to working families across the state as well as developing a productive future Florida workforce.

Bills Voted on House Floor

Unless otherwise indicated, all bills passed unanimously

- HB 671 - Relating to Pharmacy Technicians by Representative Travis Hutson (R-Palm Coast)...(101-16)
- HB 357 - Relating to Manufacturing Development by Representative Jim Boyd (R-Bradenton)...(116-1)
- HB 383 - Relating to Interstate Insurance Product Regulation Compact by Representative Matt Hudson (R-Naples)
- HB 341 - Relating to Uninsured Motorist Insurance Coverage by Representative Clay Ingram (R-Pensacola)
- HB 579 - Relating to Natural Gas Motor Fuel by Representative Lake Ray (R-Jacksonville)