



STATEHOUSE REPORT

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The legislature has officially broken for summer recess and while there are no bills receiving hearings until they return, there is still work to be done at the statehouse. This week's report contains some items of interest that are proceeding during the legislative break.

BWC strives to keep injured workers off opiates

The Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Board of Directors voted last week to approve a rule that they hope will prevent opioid dependence among injured workers. If approved by the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review, the policy would not allow reimbursement for opioid painkiller prescriptions that are written by physicians who don't use identified best medical practices.

Under the new rule, prescribers will be required to develop an individualized treatment plan and risk assessment for the worker, and monitor the worker's progress and function. The rule also strengthens the peer review process to deal with physicians who fail to comply, and allows corrective actions such as removing the physician from the network of approved providers.

This rule is part of the BWC's recent efforts to prevent opioid dependence in injured workers. Administrator/CEO Morrison provided a statement saying, "Ohio's injured workers deserve the best possible treatment that addresses their medical needs without facing the life-changing consequences of opioid dependence or addiction."



Administrator / CEO
Sarah Morrison

For more information please contact CCAO Policy Analyst Kate Neithammer at 614-220-7996 or kneithammer@ccao.org.

JMOC looks at the behavioral health redesign

The Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee (JMOC) heard from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (ODMHAS) on plans to redesign how the state pays for behavioral health services. Members of the legislative panel expressed concerns about rate cuts, how providers will be paid and how this will affect access to these services.

Dr. Mark Hurst, medical director for ODMHAS stated that the goal is not to decrease services, but rather to make the codes providers use more specific to the services that are being provided. Under the new system, what would have been billed under one code will now be billed under several codes with different rates.

The panel also heard about programs dealing with addiction in Ohio. Dr. Hurst gave a presentation that explained how addiction is a chronic disease and should be treated as such saying, "Addiction is not merely about the use of a substance, it is about the brain's response to that use and subsequent behaviors resulting from the brain's response."

Lori Criss, associate director of the Ohio Council of Behavioral Health Providers recommended the state work to provide prevention and early intervention programs for young people with ADHD and other conditions that cause a higher risk of addiction. She also suggested the state create a map of addiction prevention services provided across the state, to better coordinate treatment programs.

Cheri Walter, CEO of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities, said Medicaid expansion has helped, but it hasn't solved all of the problems. She talked about how programs need to offer more than just crisis services, explaining that to be successful, individuals need help with housing, employment services and transportation services. She also recommended a short-term problem-solving workgroup be created to address problems that arise under the new codes/rates of the behavioral health redesign.

A meeting with stakeholders is set for June 15 and the department expects to have near-final rates ready by then. The new codes will be phased in during the first half of 2017. ODMHAS is preparing training sessions and materials to help providers understand the changes.

For more information please contact CCAO Policy Analyst Kate Neithammer at 614-220-7996 or kneithammer@ccao.org.

Ohio achieves record interest savings as refinancing of state debt continues

A combination of record low interest rates coupled with the state's strong credit outlook has enabled the state to refinance state debt with substantial savings on interest costs.

Office of Budget and Management (OBM) data indicates that the state has refinanced a total of \$2.7 billion in debt since July 2011 and has achieved more than \$382 million in gross savings.

“The combination of the state’s credit outlook being upgraded by the rating agencies and recognition of Ohio’s improved financial position by investors means state bonds are pricing stronger than at any time in recent history,” OBM Capital Finance Director Kurt Kaufman said. “That has enabled the State to be opportunistic in taking advantage of the continued low interest rate environment to issue debt at historically low rates and to set new records for savings achieved through bond financings.”

Mr. Kaufman said the state’s average savings of 14.6 percent on bond refunding in recent years is three or four times the minimum standard expected from such transactions. “These are savings that historically are kind of like home runs,” he said.

The state currently has about \$9.3 billion in outstanding debt, but remains comfortably below the 5 percent limit based on the prior year’s revenue and lottery profits. Section 17 of Article 8 of the Ohio Constitution limits the amount of debt service payments in any year to no more than 5 percent of the total estimated revenues of the state for the General Revenue Fund and state lottery proceeds. The latest [OBM certification](#) for debt service in 2016 is 3.35 percent.

All three bond rating services –Fitch, Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s - all noted Ohio’s sound debt management in issuing grades for the latest refunding moves.

At least two of the rating services cited an increase in the statutory target for the state’s budget stabilization fund from 5 to 8.5 percent in the current state budget as a key factor in the state’s high credit rating. Other factors cited by Standard and Poor’s in determining the state’s bond ratings are Ohio’s:

- Long track record of proactive financial and budget management
- Improved revenue and budget performance
- A vast, broad and diverse economy
- Moderate debt levels
- Significant pension reform changes and steady progress in funding other postemployment benefits.

Mr. Kaufman said maintaining a strong credit outlook is key to keeping the state’s debt costs as low as possible. He added, “So having a stable outlook – not only are we AA+ today but for the foreseeable future – they think we are on solid financial footing and we are likely to stay there.”

For additional information regarding this article, please contact Brad Cole at bcole@ccao.org.

Statehouse, Etc.



Remaining Session Dates for 2016. House Speaker Cliff Rosenberger announced that the chamber won't return to session until November 15 and 16 - after the general election. The chamber has an if-needed date on November 29 and a regular session date on November 30. They also have December 6 and 7 reserved, with if-needed dates set for December 13 & 14.

Senate President Faber announced session and committee dates for late September and early October. The chamber will then return after the November election, with if-needed dates set for November 9, 10, 15, 16 and 22 and regular meeting dates for November 29 and 30 and December 1, 6, 7 and 8. If-needed dates are Set for December 13 & 14.



Rep. Paul Zeltwanger

There is one item of unfinished business that could bring the House back earlier. Rep. Paul Zeltwanger pulled a discharge petition last week for his Ohio Pastor Protection Act (HB 286). If he can get 50 House members to sign, it will force them to come back and vote on the bill. HB 286 specifies that no minister or religious society is required to perform a marriage that does not conform to "sincerely held religious beliefs," and it grants civil immunity for such a refusal.

Bills Introduced



- [HB 576](#)** ■ **PUBLIC RECORDS** ([Ryan, S.](#)) To exempt from the Public Records Act financial account numbers and identifying information in public records and to provide that taxpayer electronic mail address lists used by county treasurers to deliver tax bills are not public records. Am. 49.43 and 323.13
- [HB 577](#)** ■ **LAME DUCK SESSIONS** ([Boose, T.](#)) To prohibit the General Assembly from holding sessions after the general election in an even-numbered year. Am. 101.03
- [HB 578](#)** ■ **CLEVELAND COURT** ([Barnes, J.](#)) To abolish the housing division of the Cleveland Municipal Court, transfer housing proceedings to the civil division of the Cleveland Municipal Court, and to name this act the "Housing Court Efficiency and Expansion Act." Am. 1901.011, 1901.051, 1901.32, and 1901.331
- [HB 579](#)** ■ **TRANSPORTATION REPAIRS** ([Ashford, M.](#), [Sweeney, M.](#)) To make supplemental appropriations to the Department of Transportation in order to provide political subdivisions with funding for critical road maintenance repairs.