

MINUTES

JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH POLICY OVERSIGHT

March 1, 2006
Room 514-S—Statehouse

Members Present

Representative Melvin Neufeld, Chairperson
Senator James Barnett, Vice Chairperson
Senator Laura Kelly
Senator Roger Reitz
Senator Vicki Schmidt
Senator Susan Wagle
Representative Bob Bethell
Representative Bill Feuerborn
Representative Brenda Landwehr
Representative Peggy Mast
Representative Louis Ruiz

Members Absent

Senator David Haley

Staff Present

Terri Weber, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Melissa Calderwood, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Audrey Dunkel, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Jim Wilson, Revisor of Statutes Office
Renaë Jefferies, Revisor of Statutes Office
Nikki Feuerborn, Administrative Assistant
Shirley Jepson, Committee Secretary

Conferees

Dr. Marcia Nielsen, Chairperson, Kansas Health Policy Authority Board (KHPA)

Others Attending

See attached list.

Representative Mast moved to approve the minutes of the January 8 meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Representative Feuerborn. Motion carried.

Chairperson Neufeld recognized Dr. Marcia Nielsen, Chairperson, Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA), who presented a report to the Kansas Legislature by the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board (Attachment 1). Dr. Nielsen stated that the first phase of the implementation of SB 272, the legislation which created KHPA, will be completed by June 30, 2006. KHPA is working on short-term initiatives, as well as long-term initiatives, to improve health care in Kansas. Dr. Nielsen indicated that additional funding may be required as KHPA moves forward and a request for this funding will be presented after program determination has been completed.

Some actions being considered by KHPA include:

- Hire legal counsel to provide legal limited services to the Board;
- Direct the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Department of Administration for basic administrative support services to the Division of Health Policy and Finance;
- Develop a data management plan for the appropriate and effective use and dissemination of health data;
- Conduct "town hall" meetings for public input;
- Request an independent review of health costs and wellness;
- Because of escalating costs, conduct a study of Medicaid and consider innovative reforms to the Medicaid program;
- Work to reduce the use of tobacco products in the state;
- Focus on innovative ways to make health insurance more affordable for businesses, especially small businesses; and
- Ensure that the health care safety net for Kansans with low income or those without insurance is adequately supported.

Dr. Nielsen noted that the transition plans for health programs from the Division of Health Policy and Finance to the KHPA will occur on time. After a thorough review of staffing and resource needs, additional funding and resources will be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature.

Responding to a question from the Committee with regard to confirmation of one of the Board members, Dr. Nielsen reported that the person has withdrawn his name from consideration and another nominee will be presented to the Senate.

The Committee voiced concern and urgency in addressing the dental needs of Kansans, especially those citizens eligible for Medicaid, and requested a report from KHPA at the next Committee meeting on the number of dentists in Kansas and how many are offering their services to Medicaid-eligible citizens. The Committee proposed that KHPA contact leadership at the national level to emphasize that this is a critical issue and needs to be addressed.

Dr. Bob Day, Division of Health Policy and Finance, responded to a question from the Committee, stating that there is a lack of leadership at the national level on the Medicaid issue and noting that revisions need to be made to the payment structure.

With regard to a health care assistance program for small businesses, Dr. Nielsen stated that KHPA is looking at small businesses with 2-24 employees to participate in an insurance program in which the employer would pay not more than 30 percent of the health care insurance cost and the employee would pay not more than 10 percent of the cost. She noted that tax credits for small businesses, at this time, are not enough to encourage participation.

Dr. Nielsen stated that KHPA is looking at ways to pull all pieces of data together into a usable data base. The Board is reviewing how this can be accomplished, either with a private contractor or possibly the Legislative Division of Post Audit, with no final decision made at the current time.

With regard to any legislation required to implement the insurance program for small businesses, Dr. Nielsen stated that she would work with Sandy Praeger, Commissioner of the Department of Insurance, to determine if legislation is necessary to move forward with the program and will report back to the Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m. The next meeting will be on "call of the Chair."

Prepared by Shirley Jepson
Edited by Terri Weber

Approved by Committee on:

August 23, 2006

(date)