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Sent: Friday, November 08, 2013 9:32 AM
To: MO Disability Policy/Law Listserv
Subject: [Modisabilaw] Medicaid Transformation Hearings

The House Interim Committee on Medicaid Transformation met twice this week with much of the focus on acute and long term care services for persons with disabilities and seniors.

Rehabilitative Services

One important issue that received some discussion was Missouri's 2005 Medicaid cuts to rehabilitative services like physical, occupational and speech therapy. Committee members speculated as to whether the cuts may have actually increased Medicaid costs because the services can now be obtained only in institutional settings like hospitals and nursing homes. In some cases, therapy services are needed in conjunction with providing services related to evaluation, training, follow-up, etc. on the use of assistive technology devices by individuals with disabilities wanting to stay in the community. There was also testimony that loss of hearing was a huge predictor for going to a nursing home. Medicaid coverage of hearing aids for adults was also eliminated in 2005.

Money Follows the Person/Balancing Incentives Program

Committee members also voiced considerable support for initiatives to increase access to home and community based (HCB) services to keep individuals out of nursing homes. Jennifer Tidball, the Interim Director of the MO HealthNet Division and Celesta Hartgraves, the Director of the Division of Senior and Disability Services in DHSS testified about initiatives like Money Follows the Person (MFP) and the Balancing Incentive Program. Chair Barnes and other members asked many questions about how individuals are assessed for home-based services and how to increase the numbers of persons able to transition out of nursing homes

Medicaid Expansion

As with previous hearings, there were philosophical discussions about Medicaid expansion. Chair Barnes talked about the outlines of a proposal to expand coverage to around 225,000 adults while reducing the income eligibility levels for the Children's Health Insurance Program and adults eligible for MO HealthNet coverage through Blind Pension who would be eligible for federally subsidized policies through the Affordable Care Act. Rep. Barnes referred to the discussion as a starting point, rather than a formal proposal to be introduced as legislation.

Upcoming Hearings

The Senate Interim Committee on Medicaid Transformation is scheduled to meet next week on Wednesday, November 13th at 1:00 pm in the Senate Lounge. The session will be a committee work session. No testimony will be taken.

The final House Interim Committee on Medicaid Transformation is scheduled for Tuesday, November 19th at 1:00 pm.

Governor Nixon has also invited members of both the House and Senate Committees to meet with him on November 26th at 10:30 am at the Governor's Office Building. In his written invitation, the Governor said he wanted to present his ideas to legislators "for making our health care system more efficient and effective". The meeting will be open to the media.

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