

January 22, 2020



EIDE • WALTON

LOBBYING AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Legislative Update Week Two

Martin Luther King, Jr Holiday

The Legislature honored the MLK holiday on Monday but gaveled in Tuesday morning for a short week of subcommittees and committees.

Legislators all over the state spent the day in service volunteering alongside constituents back home.



Increased Security

Security at the Statehouse was increased over the week due to concerns over protests or violence due to the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden on Wednesday morning.

Thankfully, the Statehouse halls remained calm and orderly but the readiness and willingness of our State Troopers to defend its honor is sincerely appreciated by all who are up here.



Subcommittee Update

[HF 5](#) EXPANDED ENTITIES - HEALTHCARE LOAN REPAYMENT. Allows health care professionals who graduate from programs other than at DMU to be eligible for loan repayments for working in eligible rural communities.

- Current code designates this program for Des Moines University only. The bill would open the program to all accredited universities that offer degree programs for physicians, physician assistants, podiatrist and physical therapists.
- Other health care professions sought to be included, but committee members indicated their intent to leave the four covered professions and expand the colleges and universities that are eligible. Rep. Winckler asked that a study committee for all rural health care recruitment programs be amended to the bill. Reps. Bosman and Kerr indicated a willingness to consider her recommendation.
- IRHA registration: FOR

Telehealth Update

So far in session, telehealth has been a priority policy discussion in the Iowa House. In response to the Covid19 pandemic, both state and federal emergency declarations have required 100% reimbursement of telehealth services. For the past two legislative sessions Representative Joel Fry (R) Osceola has led the discussion on the importance of payment parity for telehealth services with a focus on access to care in rural parts of the state.

Three bills have been introduced:

[HF 88](#) - that allows for the provision of audio only services for health care professions.

[HF 89](#) - requires payment at 100% of in person rates for telehealth services for behavioral health care only.

[SF 92](#) - requires payment at 100% of in person rates for all health care services.

During a subcommittee meeting on HF 89, Rep. Joel Fry indicated his intention to deal with telehealth reimbursement in three separate pieces of legislation:

- 1) Behavioral Health
- 2) Physical Health
- 3) Audio only

HF 89 passed unanimously out of subcommittee.

Wellmark has proposed a telehealth reimbursement strategy in lieu of legislation. The draft proposal:


- Extends 100% reimbursement for telehealth services through 6/30/21,

- Separates behavioral health and mental health,
- Establishes a reimbursement baseline for behavioral health at 85% reimbursement and physical health at 70% of in person services,
- Allows for reimbursement incentives for meeting certain criteria related to safety, quality and clinical efficacy that would allow providers to reach 95% of in person reimbursement for telehealth visits.

This policy discussion is likely to continue for much of the 2021 legislative session as policy makers, providers and payers work together to determine the most effective payment strategy for telehealth services.

COVID Vaccine Distribution Update

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) released more information about the upcoming Phase 1B distributions. On Thursday, the Governor held a press conference to announce the addition of persons aged 65 and older as a priority population throughout all distribution phases. IDPH is asking Iowans for patience as vaccines are in short supply in many areas of the state at this time. Phase 1B is set to begin on February 1. For more information visit their website [here](#).




WHEN WILL I GET A COVID-19 VACCINATION?

Vaccine Distribution to Priority Populations


PHASE 1B - IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

Persons aged 65 and older are eligible for the vaccine during any tier.




TIER 1

- First responders (e.g., firefighters, police officers, and child welfare social workers)
- PK-12 school staff, early childhood education, and childcare workers




TIER 2

- Food, agriculture, distribution and manufacturing workers who work in or live in congregate settings that do not allow for social distancing
- Individuals with disabilities living in home settings and their direct care staff




TIER 3

- Staff of and individuals living in congregate settings (does not include college dormitories)
- Government officials, to ensure continuity of government including staff, engaged in state business at the Iowa Capitol during the legislative session



TIER 4

- Inspectors responsible for hospital, long-term care, and child safety



TIER 5

- Correctional facility staff and individuals incarcerated

PHASE 1B BEGINS FEBRUARY 2021

Timeframes are estimated as of January 2021 and are subject to change.

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