Senate Committee Hears Mental Health Briefing
The Senate Education Committee, chaired by Senator Molly Baumgardner (R-Louisburg), met yesterday for a briefing on mental health from the Kansas Association of School Psychologists and the Kansas School Counselor Association. The committee heard that school counselors have an average caseload of 464 students, when the recommended number by both the state and national organizations is 250. On average, one in every five youth ages 12 through 17 have a mental health diagnosis. Not surprisingly, students’ mental health has been identified as the number one concern of both school counselors and building principals. Unfortunately, the KASP noted there is a shortage of school psychologists, with 40 openings in the state this month. The groups made recommendations to address their concerns ranging from expanded funding to hire more counselors and psychologists, to student loan forgiveness to the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs.

House Budget Committee Talks State Hospitals
The House Social Services Budget Committee, chaired by Representative Will Carpenter (R-El Dorado), met again yesterday afternoon to review the budgets of the state’s mental health hospitals. The conversation went as expected, with concerns about the number of available beds, the continued staffing issues at the state hospitals and the general need for more funding in the mental health system. Representatives from the Kansas Mental Health Coalition, the Association of Community Mental Health Centers and all three law enforcement associations spoke about the continued need for more beds at Osawatomie, as well as the work that has been done with providers and law enforcement to try to address the issues, including the work of the Kansas Hospital Association Behavioral Health Committee. The committee adjourned without making recommendations.

Bill to End Surprise Medical Billing Introduced
Senator Barbara Bollier (D-Mission Hills) introduced Senate Bill 357, the End Surprise Medical Billing Act. The bill would codify what qualifies as balance billing and what qualifies as surprise medical billing. It prohibits balance billing, as well as surprise medical billing. However, if a person consents in writing once they have been given an estimate for care by an out-of-network health care provider or facility, they cannot claim they have received a surprise bill.
The bill also addresses how out-of-network providers are to be reimbursed. They may take the median in-network rate, which the insurer is required to provide, or they may go to independent dispute resolution, which will be established by the insurance commissioner. The cost of the IDR process is paid by the non-prevailing party. Payment determination shall be made no later than 30 days after the request for resolution is received. Payment to the provider from the insurer, once the determination is made, must occur within 30 days. The bill also requires the health care provider to notify the patient within 48 hours of scheduling the appointment that they are an out-of-network provider. It places the responsibility on the health care provider to notify the insurer within 48 hours of changes that may affect the accuracy of the provider directory, while adding specific requirements for the insurer related to publishing and updating provider directories.

House Fails to Pass Abortion Constitutional Amendment
The House spent hours on a "call of the House," which requires all members to be present and in their seats, in an attempt to convince four more Representatives to vote in favor of Senate Concurrent Resolution 1613. The resolution would place before Kansas voters the question of adding language to the Kansas Constitution specifically stating there is no constitutional right to an abortion and reserving to the people the ability to regulate abortion through the elected members of the legislature of the State of Kansas. At issue for those voting against the resolution was the timing of the vote on the question – during the August primaries this year, instead of the November elections when more voters would come out to make their opinions known.

Next Week's Schedule
Monday, Feb. 10

Senate Public Health and Welfare – 9:30 a.m. 118N
Discussion and action on Senate Bill 252 – Expanding medical assistance eligibility and implementing a health insurance plan reinsurance program

Senate Ways and Means – 10:30 a.m. 548S
Subcommittee Reports: Kansas State Board of Healing Arts
Hearing on Executive Reorganization Order No. 45 – Transferring the functions of the State Employee Health Benefits Plan and the State Worker Compensation Self-Insurance Fund from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to the division of the State Employee Health Benefits Plan within the Department of Administration

House Appropriations – 9:00 a.m. 112N
Budget Committee Report: Representative Rahjes, chair, Higher Education, Kansas Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board, Kansas State Board of Healing Arts
House Social Services Budget – 3:30 p.m. 144S
Budget Hearing: Larned State Hospital, Osawatomie State Hospital
Staff overview, agency presentation, public testimony, possible recommendations: Health Care Stabilization Fund Board of Governors

House Insurance – 3:30 pm 212N
Hearing on House Bill 2459 – Limiting utilization review conducted by health plans under certain circumstances involving the treatment of mental illness or substance abuse disorder.

Tuesday, Feb. 11
Senate Public Health and Welfare – 9:30 a.m. 118N
Discussion and action on Senate Bill 252 – Expanding medical assistance eligibility and implementing a health insurance plan reinsurance program

House Appropriations – 9:00 a.m. 112N
Hearing and possible action on Executive Reorganization Order No. 44 – Renaming the Kansas Department for Children and Families within the Kansas Department of Human Services; abolishing the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services and transferring the functions to the Kansas Department of Human Services; transferring the functions of the Department of Corrections regarding the juvenile services programs and juvenile facilities and institutions, excluding the Larned juvenile correctional facility, to the Kansas Department of Human Services

House Children and Seniors/House Health and Human Services – 1:30 p.m. 346S
Joint Committee Meeting: Suicide Prevention Programs

House Social Services Budget – 3:30 p.m. 144S
Possible Continuation of Recommendations: Health Care Stabilization Fund Board of Governors staff overview, agency presentation, public testimony: Kansas Department of Health and Environment-Health and Health Care Finance

Wednesday, Feb. 12
Senate Public Health and Welfare – 9:30 a.m. 118N
Presentation: Midwest Stem Cell Therapy Center

Senate Ways and Means – 10:30 a.m. 548S
Subcommittee Reports: Kansas Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board; Kansas Board of Pharmacy; Kansas State Board of Nursing

House Children and Seniors – 1:30 p.m. 346S
Hearing on House Bill 2229 – Concerning the admission into evidence of any tape or recording created using an electronic monitoring device in an adult care home.
House Health and Human Services – 1:30 p.m. 546S
Informational Briefing: Midwest Stem Cell Therapy Center

House Social Services Budget – 3:30 p.m. 144S
Possible continuation, public testimony, possible recommendations: Kansas Department of Health and Environment-Health and Health Care Finance
Hearing on House Bill 2550 – Increasing reimbursement rates for providers of home and community-based services under the intellectual or developmentally disabled waiver

House Insurance – 3:30 pm 212N
Hearing on House Bill 2557 – Establishing a $100 maximum out-of-pocket cost-share per month per covered person for prescription insulin drugs

Thursday, Feb. 13
Senate Public Health and Welfare – 9:30 a.m. 118N
Hearing on Senate Bill 320 – Expanding the definition of "infectious disease" in certain testing statutes related to crimes in which the transmission of bodily fluids from one person to another may have been involved

House Appropriations – 9:00 a.m. 112N
Budget Committee Report: Representative Carpenter, chair, Social Services, Kansas Neurological Institute, Larned State Hospital, Osawatomie State Hospital and Parsons State Hospital

House Federal and State Affairs – 9:00 a.m. 346S
Hearing on House Bill 2563 – Increasing the minimum age to purchase or possess cigarettes and tobacco products from 18 to 21; prohibiting cigarette vending machines and flavored vaping products

House Social Services Budget – 3:30 p.m. 144S
Budget Hearing: Kansas Department of Health and Environment - Health and Health Care Finance, possible continuation of recommendations

Friday, Feb. 14
No scheduled meetings in relevant committees

KHA Bill Tracker
The Kansas Hospital Association Bill Tracker is designed to keep you up-to-date on current legislation. KHA will update and share this document on a weekly basis while the legislators are in session. It lists the bill number and sponsor; subject of the proposed legislation; current status; and last action. If you have questions regarding legislation, please contact Chad Austin or Audrey Dunkel at (785) 233-7436.