|  |
| --- |
|  |
| **GOVERNMENTAL POLICY GROUP, INC.**17 SOUTH HIGH STREET – SUITE 245COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215-3413PHONE: 614-461-9335FAX: 614-461-9336**Ohio Speech & Hearing Governmental Affairs Coalition**Legislative Activities Report**October 2015**The Ohio General Assembly has returned from its summer recess as both chambers resumed session and committee hearings in late September. Although the Senate has scheduled more session dates than the House, both chambers are expected to meet until the middle of December, at which point they will recess until after the first of the year. In the legislative arena, GAC continues to watch for movement on HB 184 and SB 194. HB 184 seeks to license music therapists, and GAC has significant concerns about many of the bill’s provisions. We are working with ASHA, the Ohio Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, the Counselor and Social Worker Board, and the statewide OT, PT, counselor and social worker associations, who all share our concerns. We sent a collective letter to the sponsors of HB 184 asking them to suspend further hearings on the bill until our concerns can be addressed.Similarly, we are working in coalition with many other healthcare provider groups in outlining our concerns on SB 194. That legislation would seek to legitimize “alternative healthcare practitioners” and would allow them to practice within other providers’ scopes of practice without penalty. Similar to our efforts on HB 184, the Ohio Board is working collaboratively with GAC on our SB 194 efforts, as well.Outside of the General Assembly, we are continuing to collect data on how the changes to the Bureau of Vocational Rehab’s fee schedule for hearing aids is affecting consumers and providers. As you may recall, OOD announced in August that it would only pay Medicaid rates for BVR hearing aid services. We have informed OOD that this will likely result in an access to care problem, as fewer and fewer providers will be willing to take BVR patients. The Ohio Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology will be asking practitioners to take a survey on this important issue during mid-October. We will then use this information when we meet with OOD on November 3rd. In the education arena, GAC and the Ohio Board are continuing to push for ODE to create and distribute guidance to school districts on how to implement the workload process. ODE had promised to provide districts with guidance shortly after the operating standards rule was promulgated in July 2014. ODE has not produced that guidance and our inquiries have gone largely unanswered. We understand through some ODE sources that any guidance is still more than a year away from being released. Since this is an unacceptable delay that is making it impossible for districts to implement workload, the Ohio Board has sought to provide some resources of its own to practitioners and school districts. In addition, GAC is considering whether a legislative remedy is necessary. Also on the education front, GAC was approached by the ESCs and school psychologists about working together on a caseload/workload/shortage taskforce. This falls in line with the work that our own workgroup completed earlier this year. This new taskforce is set to meet on October 15th and will determine how we can help to address shortage concerns for many related service providers. The group is also scheduled to meet with the Director of the Office of Exceptional Children at ODE, Dr. Sue Zake, on October 27th to talk more about shortages and solutions.Attracting quite a bit of news recently has been the Ohio House of Representative’s search to fill two open seats. The House Republican Caucus recently announced that it found a replacement for the 89th House District seat, which was vacated by former Representative Steve Kraus after his felony theft conviction earlier this year. According to the selection committee’s chairman, Rep. Kirk Schuring, Ottawa County Commissioner Steven Arndt emerged from a list of 14 applicants as the selection committee’s choice to fill the vacancy. Mr. Arndt has served as an Ottawa County Commissioner for 27 years. In similar news, House Minority Leader Fred Strahorn announced plans to seat John Boccieri, a former state and federal lawmaker, in the vacant 59th House District seat left open after the resignation of longtime legislator Rep. Ron Gerberry. Mr. Gerberry resigned from the House after allegations became public that the 27-year legislator had overpaid vendors from his campaign fund and subsequently received refunds from the venders. Mr. Boccieri previously served in the state legislature before a brief stint in Congress.On the federal font, U.S. House Speaker John Boehner shocked the nation when he announced his intent to resign from Congress on October 30th. The West Chester Republican said he initially planned to resign last year, but postponed it when former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor lost in a primary election. His resignation comes amidst intensifying pressure from conservatives over a looming budget battle and a potential government shutdown. Mr. Boehner has served as Speaker since 2011 and previously served as both minority and majority leader of the House. He was first elected to Congress in 1991 after serving five years in the Ohio House. Speaker Boehner’s resignation sparked speculation nationally about who might succeed him as Speaker. It also requires Republicans to find a replacement in Ohio’s 8th Congressional District. Governor John Kasich will need to call a special election to choose Speaker Boehner’s successor. The special election could draw a number of current state lawmakers into the race. State Senator Bill Beagle has already announced plans to run and interest has also been expressed by two other sitting state legislators – Senator Bill Coley and Senator Chris Widener. The district includes all of Butler, Clark, Darke, Miami and Preble counties, and part of Mercer County. Ohio Senate President Keith Faber’s name is also in the mix as he current represents counties that are covered by the 8th Congressional District.  Ohio’s unemployment rate continued to drop, sinking to 4.7% in August compared to 5% in July. According to the most recent figures released by the Department of Job and Family Services Ohio had 265,000 unemployed workers in August, down 21,000 from the previous month. Ohio’s unemployment rate continues to beat the national rate, which is 5.1%.Finally, at GAC’s request, Governor Kasich named October 2015 “Ohio Audiology Awareness and Protect Your Hearing” Month! This is in line with a national effort by the American Academy of Audiology and statewide effort by the Ohio Academy. The goal of the effort is to make more Ohioans aware about noise-induced hearing loss and what an audiology can do to help protect and improve a person’s hearing. |

 We have been tracking the following legislation that has been introduced in the 131st General Assembly:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **HB64** | **OPERATING BUDGET** (SMITH R) To make operating appropriations for the biennium beginning July 1, 2015, and ending June 30, 2017, and to provide authorization and conditions for the operation of state programs. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 6/30/2015 **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR**Eff. 7/1/15 |
|   |
| **HB89** | **MEDICAID SCHOOL PROGRAM** (DEVITIS A) Regarding the Medicaid School Program. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 5/13/2015 **SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED**House Health and Aging CommitteeFourth Hearing |
|   |
| **HB98** | **CHILDHOOD APRAXIA OF SPEECH AWARENESS DAY** (BROWN T) To designate the fourteenth day of May as "Childhood Apraxia of Speech Awareness Day." |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 9/30/2015 Senate Health and Human Services CommitteeFirst Hearing |
|   |
| **HB109** | **STATE HEALTH BENEFIT EXCHANGE** (STINZIANO M, ANTONIO N) To create the Ohio Health Benefit Exchange. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 4/28/2015 House Insurance CommitteeFirst Hearing |
|   |
| **HB157** | **HEALTH INSURANCE-MEDICAID** (BUTLER, JR. J, JOHNSON T) To revise the laws governing health insurance coverage, medical malpractice claims, the Medicaid program, health care provider discipline, and required and permitted health care provider disclosures; and to create the Nonstandard Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangement Program and to terminate that program after five years. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 5/5/2015 House Insurance CommitteeSecond Hearing |
|   |
| **HB184** | **MUSIC THERAPY LICENSING** (DOVILLA M, ANTONIO N) To require the licensure of music therapists and to require the State Medical Board to regulate the licensure and practice of music therapists. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 6/16/2015 House Commerce and Labor CommitteeSecond Hearing |
|   |
| **HB213** | **OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE RENEWAL** (BRINKMAN T) To make occupational licenses subject to annual renewal become biennial licenses and to permit a licensee to take continuing education courses online. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 6/23/2015 House Commerce and Labor CommitteeFirst Hearing |
|   |
| **SB3** | **HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL DISTRICT EXEMPTION** (HITE C, FABER K) To exempt high-performing school districts from certain laws. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 5/19/2015House Education CommitteeSecond Hearing |
|   |
| **SB17** | **MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY** (CAFARO C) To require the Medicaid program to cover the eligibility expansion group authorized by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and to make an appropriation. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 2/11/2015 Senate Medicaid CommitteeFirst Hearing |
|   |
| **SB32** | **MEDICAID COVERAGE-TELEMEDICINE** (TAVARES C) Regarding insurance and Medicaid coverage of telemedicine services. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 3/25/2015Senate Medicaid CommitteeFirst Hearing |
|   |
| **SB72** | **MEDICAID-PROMPT PAYMENT** (TAVARES C) To specify that the Ohio prompt payment law applies to payment of claims by Medicaid managed care organizations. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 3/25/2015Senate Medicaid CommitteeFirst Hearing |
|   |
| **SB86** | **NOT-FOR-PROFIT QUARTER AUCTIONS** (GARDNER R) To permit charitable organizations to conduct not-for-profit quarter auctions. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 4/14/2015Senate Finance CommitteeFirst Hearing |
|   |
| **SB90** | **HEALTH CARE WORKER-IDENTIFICATION** (TAVARES C) To require that a health care professional wear identification when providing care or treatment in the presence of a patient. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 3/4/2015 Referred to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee |
|   |
| **SB94** | **MEDICAID SCHOOL PROGRAM** (BACON K, LEHNER P) Regarding the Medicaid School Program. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 3/25/2015Senate Medicaid CommitteeFirst Hearing |
|   |
| **SB98** | **HEARING AID-COVERAGE** (BROWN E) To require health insurers to offer coverage for hearing aids. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 3/24/2015 Senate Insurance CommitteeFirst Hearing |
|   |
| **SB194** | **COMPLEMENTARY-ALTERNATIVE HEALTH SERVICES** (JORDAN K) Regarding the provision of complementary or alternative health services. |
|   | ***Current Status:*** | 9/15/2015 Referred to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee |