



## **The Delaware Health Care Commission (DHCC) Meeting**

September 2, 2021

9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

### **Meeting Attendance and Minutes**

**Commission Members Present:** Theodore W. Becker (Mayor of Lewes), Cabinet Secretary Rick Geisenberger (DOF), Dr. Roger Harrison (Nemours), Richard Heffron, Melissa Jones, Dr. Jan Lee (DHIN), Cabinet Secretary Molly Magarik (DHSS), Dr. Richard Margolis (DSCYF), Nick Moriello (Highmark), and Insurance Commissioner Trinidad Navarro (DOI)

**Meeting Facilitator:** Dr. Nancy Fan (Chair)

**Commission Members Absent:** None

**Health Care Commission Staff:** Elisabeth Massa (Executive Director), Eschalla Clarke (Social Services Senior Administrator), and Latoya Wright (Manager Statistics and Research)

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Dr. Fan called the meeting to order at approximately 9:04 a.m. via WebEx. It was determined a quorum was present. Dr. Fan asked public attendees to virtually sign-in by placing their name and affiliation in the chat box or by sending their name and contact information to the DHCC Resource Account ([dhcc@delaware.gov](mailto:dhcc@delaware.gov)).

Dr. Fan opened the meeting sharing an update on Delaware's COVID vaccination, testing, and positivity rate. Detailed information is available on the [My Healthy Community website](#). The vaccination data on the website comes from DelVax, which is the statewide data vaccination data programing and looks slightly different than CDC data. Currently, about 76% of Delaware adults (18+) have received one dose and over 58% are fully vaccinated. The state's positivity rate has been hovering 7.3% - 7.5%. In June it was just 1%. Today's positivity rate is higher than we were last year at this time. The breakthrough rate for those vaccinated is .31%.

Secretary Magarik asked Dr. Fan to comment, as a clinician, on vaccinations for pregnant women. Dr. Fan shared the CDC is now recommending offering pregnant patients to be vaccinated and the American College of OBGYN and Society for Maternal and Fetal Medicine has been making the same recommendation as well since the Spring. There are more severe complications for pregnant women who contract COVID and also complications for the unborn child. The Secretary added we are seeing increased maternal mortality across the country, not just Delaware.

**From the WebEx Chat Box:**

from Cheryl Heiks to everyone: 9:12 AM

Please talk about the impression amongst those that have had COVID-19, who feel they have “natural immunity@ and therefore do not need to be immunized

Dr. Fan shared former DHCC commissioner Dennis Rochford passed away at the end of July. Mr. Rochford served on the Commission for many years. A moment of silence was observed during the meeting to remember him.

**BOARD BUSINESS**

**ACTION ITEM: Approve July 1, 2021 meeting minutes**

Dr. Fan asked the commissioners to review the draft July 1, 2021 meeting minutes. There were no comments or changes. Ted Becker made a motion to approve, and Secretary Geisenberger seconded. The motion to approve was unanimously accepted by all commissioners present. The approved minutes are available on the [DHCC website](#).

**Strategic Retreat Planning**

Dr. Fan announced the Retreat will be held on Friday, October 29 from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m. She asked the commissioners if they had any specific items they would like to discuss at the Retreat. Suggested topics include a review of current DHCC programs, discuss new DHCC programs, and diversity/equity/inclusion to address systemic racism and health inequities. Secretary Geisenberger suggested one of the topics should be the federal funding that will be available under ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) as the State awaits final regulations on how the money can be spent. The discussion could include how the funds could be used for capital transformation type projects. Dr. Fan suggested the [recommendations](#) from the Pandemic Resurgence Advisory Committee could be reviewed.

**From the WebEx Chat Box:**

from Chris Otto - DE Nurses Assc. to everyone: 9:20 AM

Rick, we believe it is imperative to talk about the recovery of the healthcare workforce, both mental health and retention/growth of staff. That would be a very impactful capital project. Our healthcare workforce is projected to experience PTSD-levels of stress and mental health issues for years after this current pandemic is "over." In addition to the wellbeing of Delaware's healthcare workforce, we should also be looking at ongoing emergency preparedness training of ALL members of the healthcare workforce for future events.

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

**Health Trends**

Secretary Magarik thanked Dr. Fan for her update on the pandemic earlier in the meeting. A health trends presentation is an item on the DHCC Seasonal Calendar for September. Secretary Magarik’s

presentation focused on the pandemic's impact on cancer screenings. She shared data on cancer screening rates (breast, cervical and colorectal). While there has been some rebound, cancer screening rates have not returned to the level pre-pandemic. Secretary Magarik shared the Division of Public Health has increased outreach efforts which include a cancer screening campaign and provide direct outreach to clients via the Cancer Screening Navigators. All Delawareans have access to a cancer screening navigator through the website [healthydelaware.org](http://healthydelaware.org). The Secretary's presentation is available on the [DHCC website](#).

#### **From the WebEx Chat Box:**

from Tyler Blanchard to everyone: 9:27 AM

Secretary Magarik, we would love to promote this screening effort within our partner primary care practices in DE

from Cheryl Heiks to everyone: 9:31 AM

Is there confidence that the physician community is speaking with one voice when it comes to the COVID-19 vaccine? Still hearing (second-hand) out of date information about their safety & effectiveness.

from Matt Bittle to everyone: 9:33 AM

How much is a health care employee shortage a concern for DHSS and providers?

#### ***CostAware***

Secretary Magarik provided an update on the new DHSS initiative, *CostAware*. The initiative springs off the efforts on the federal level to provide more cost and price transparency to consumers. *CostAware* will be a tool that consumers and policy makers can use to learn more about cost and quality. *CostAware* will include a public-facing, consumer-friendly website, [CostAware.org](http://CostAware.org). The data on the website will use Health Care Claims Database (HCCD) claims data, managed by the Delaware Health Information Network (DHIN). The Secretary announced the Department will be hosting informational webinars for health systems, legislators, and other stakeholders this fall to introduce the initiative.

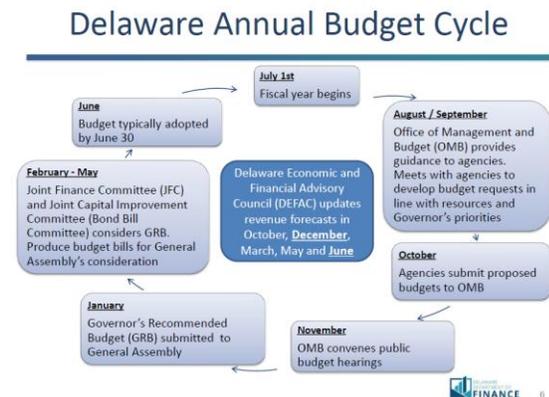
Before moving on to the next segment, Dr. Fan mentioned that there were several comments in the WebEx Chat Box. She addressed Cheryl Heiks question about the vaccine for those who have had COVID and feel they may have natural immunities. Dr. Fan shared, per the CDC recommendations, even if you were previously infected, you should get the vaccination. She also shared that with respect to physician's speaking with one voice, all physician organizations are aligned in support of the vaccinations. With regards to Matt Bittle's comment on "how much is a health care employee shortage a concern for DHSS and providers," Dr. Fan commented it's a concern across the nation and health care workforce is both and short-term and long-term priority for the Commission.

#### **State Budget Review**

Secretary Geisenberger shared an overview of the final budget enacted by the General Assembly. The Operating Budget grew 4.9 in part due to the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 final budget included providing health care for low-income Delawareans, helping those

afflicted with substance use, providing services in the community for the most vulnerable, and supporting our health care workers. Other highlights included: there was no premium increase for state employee health care; HB 100 will provide \$8 million for student mental health services; and funding increases in the Bond and Capital Improvements Act.

Secretary Geisenberger’s presentation included a graphic of Delaware’s Annual Budget Cycle. This October, agencies will be submitting proposed budgets to OMB.



Next, Secretary Geisenberger shared a financial overview of FY 2023. Barring a major pandemic resurgence, the State should have adequate resources on hand to address regular budget demands and COVID response.

His presentation also highlighted ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding and projects.

## ARPA Projects

- Federal relief funds (ARPA) available for projects that:
  - Meet pandemic response needs
  - Provide immediate economic stabilization for impacted households & businesses
  - Rebuilds a stronger, more equitable economy in communities hit hard by COVID-19
  - Addresses systemic public health, safety and economic challenges
- Health Care Projects should:
  - Mitigate COVID-19 spread, improve public health operations, or make transformative investments in health care delivery systems in communities most impacted by COVID
  - Comply with federal ARPA regulations
  - Maintain fiscal responsibility
    - Not expand the State’s operating budget
    - Ideally mitigate or reduce out-year costs
    - Leverage county, municipal government and private matching sources
    - Improve health care outcomes for communities hardest hit by COVID
    - Leverage existing processes around community investment

Secretary Magarik shared federal money has come directly to DHSS. For the duration of the federal public health emergency, which we are hearing will be the end of this calendar year, anyone who is currently on Medicaid (unless they pass away, voluntarily dis-enroll, or move out of state), Delaware must maintain them on the Medicaid rolls. This has been a significant source of funding. In addition, the Division of Public Health has also received direct federal funding to address the pandemic.

Secretary Magarik shared DHSS brought on a new employee (Shabool Henry) to help track federal grants and coordinate compliance. The Secretary shared her email address in the chat box.

Dr. Fan inquired if Delaware had to go into the state's emergency budget. Secretary Geisenberger said yes, the state did in FY 2021 make a withdraw of about \$63 million, however, it was restored and another \$224 million was added this year.

Dr. Fan's second question was regarding ARPA funding. In a broad view, are we looking at the money as an accelerator in programs that should be sustainable within in themselves? Secretary Geisenberger commented that it ranges.

Secretary Geisenberger's presentation is available on the [DHCC website](#).

**From the WebEx Chat box:**

from Molly Magarik to everyone: 10:01 AM  
<https://governor.delaware.gov/relief/>

from Molly Magarik to everyone: 10:11 AM  
[shabool.henry@delaware.gov](mailto:shabool.henry@delaware.gov)

from Anthony to everyone: 10:11 AM  
Sorry, what's his full name and email?

from Molly Magarik to everyone: 10:11 AM  
Shabool Henry (she/her/hers)

from Molly Magarik to everyone: 10:12 AM  
[shabool.henry@delaware.gov](mailto:shabool.henry@delaware.gov)

**UPDATES**

**House Bill 48 (Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program)**

Dr. Fan provided an update on the House Bill 48 (Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program). The bill was signed into law in August. This will be a state-sponsored loan repayment program supported by the Governor's budget and Supplemental bill. The DHCC will reconvene the HCPLRP workgroup this fall to discuss the components of the program and a vendor will be assisting with creating an electronic application and marketing.

Secretary Geisenberger inquired about the program funding. The Governor's budget included \$500,000 and a supplemental bill included another \$500,000. He asked Secretary Magarik if DHSS would be submitting a "Door-Opener." Secretary Magarik shared DHSS asked for an initial \$500,000 because there is work to stand up the program, and therefore DHSS did not want to ask for a full year of funding. DHSS will be asking for the annualization and for it to show in the budget as \$1 million a year.

## **Senate Substitute 1 for Senate Bill 120 (Primary Care)**

Dr. Fan shared the Collaborative will be reconvene this fall. The membership will be slightly different because of the [legislation](#). The DHCC is working with consultants, Mercer, as well as the Department of Insurance and their consultant Freedman Healthcare.

### **ADJOURN**

Dr. Fan announced an upcoming event on September 10 called “Delaware Day,” hosted by the Delaware Health Sciences Alliance. Delaware Day is an annual healthcare workforce recruitment event that brings together for the only time each year all of Delaware’s health systems for a collaborative recruitment effort for Delaware.

Dr. Fan announced Ayanna Harrison with the DHCC has moved on to a new position. On behalf of the DHCC, Dr. Fan thanked her for being such a valuable member of the team and commented that she will be greatly missed.

Dr. Fan asked if there was any public comment. Hearing none, the meeting was adjourned. The next DHCC meeting will be held on October 7, 2021 from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

### **Public Meeting Attendees September 2, 2021**

Lori Ann Rhoads	Medical Society of Delaware
Frank Pyle	Department of Insurance
Chris Haas	Department of Insurance
David Roose	Department of Finance
Jill Fredel	DHSS
Steven Costantino	DHSS
Melissa Keiper	DHSS
Kathy Collison	DHSS
Nina Figueroa	Department of Human Resources
Tyler Blanchard	Aledade
Pamela Gardner	Delaware Health Sciences Alliance
Anthony Onugu	United Medical ACO
Brian Olson	La Red Health Center
Christina Crooks Bryan	Delaware Healthcare Association
Kim Blanch	Beebe Healthcare
Lincoln Willis	Willis Group LLC
Monica Alvarez	Brandywine Counseling
Matt Bittle	PPDE
Mashiya Williams	delcf
Nicole Freedman	Morris James
Pat Redmond	Nemours

Yvette Santiago  
RBK  
Shay Scott  
Chris Otto  
Joanne Haase  
Paula Roy  
Cheryl Heiks  
Lolita Lopez  
Maggie Norris Bent  
Mary Jo Condon  
Vinayak  
Delaney McGonegal  
Nora Hoban  
Randil Munson  
Jose Tieso  
Judy Pappenhagen  
Valeria Coverdale  
Sandra Farina  
Sheri Knight

Nemours  
Kidner  
Henrietta Johnson Medical Center  
Delaware Nurses Association  
League of Women Voters of Delaware  
Roy Associates  
Delaware Health Care Facilities Association  
Westside Family Healthcare  
Westside Family Healthcare  
Freedman HealthCare  
Freedman HealthCare  
MACHC  
MACHC  
Randil Munson Consulting LLC