

2023 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



NASW- LA

This report is a summary of legislative activity for the 2023 Regular Legislative Session performed for the NASW-LA



2023 Priorities

The 2023 Regular Session began with a strong budget forecast ahead of the projected FY 25 Fiscal Cliff. This allowed the Chapter to focus on other imminent policy concerns. Those included:

- LMHP Medicaid Rates
- Behavioral Health Access
- Criminal Justice
- Criminalization of Healthcare

The key bills from each of those categories will be broken down on later pages to highlight legislation, stances and outcomes from this session.



Elly@seersuckerstrategies.com



Stephen@seersuckerstrategies.com

Reimbursement

- Licensed Mental Health Provider Medicaid Rates and Substance Abuse Inpatient Rates

Louisiana Department of Health has implemented an every three year Medicaid Rate Review. After each rate is reviewed, any suggested increase is then recommended to the legislature to be amended into the state budget. This process differs from previous rate increases as typically those would be added into the original budget request by the Department of Health instead of requiring an amendment.

NASW-LA and many other behavioral health stakeholders advocated throughout the process for the inclusion of recommended rate increases for LMHP's and residential substance abuse. The total needed state general fund required for these additions was \$27 million. We were disappointed that those increases were not incorporated into the final budget or that additionally LDH was cut by another \$100 million. One of our top priorities for the 2024 Regular Session will be the adjustment of these rates.

Position: Supported

Outcome: Failed



Care Access

• HB 55

Directs that an incarcerated person who has been diagnosed with a serious mental illness, prior to that person's release, with an appointment or walk-in instructions for a community mental health provider to ensure continuity of care and further established peer support and diagnosis by facility department also be made available to that individual while incarcerated.

Position: Supported
Outcome: Passed

• HB 468

HB 488 by Rep.Pressly requires a health plan to respond on a prior authorization for services request from a provider within 48 hours. This legislation requires prompt notification to providers to avoid delay in patient services.

Position: Supported
Outcome: Passed



Care Access

• SB 34

HB 34 by Sen Bernard requires all physical issued State ID's to have the national suicide hotline number printed on them & additionally would be on the home page of the LA Wallet APP (each time you open the app to view your ID.)

Position: Supported
Outcome: Passed

• HB 367

HB 367 by Rep. Phelps provides a child with a developmental delay in the Early Steps Program who is about to age out of the program be transitioned in a mandated time frame to the appropriate supports within the school system to avoid an interruption of services.

Position: Supported
Outcome: Passed



Care Access

- HB 203

HB 203 by Rep. DeVillier would have potentially places a tax on some critical items (ex: baby formula, groceries, prescription drugs).

Position: Opposed
Outcome: Failed

- HB 353

HB 353 Allows all students up to 3 days off of school for mental health purposes, not just a physical ailment.

This clearly delineates for LA Schools between mental and physical health and the management of stress and anxiety. This will also require posting information on school system website to aid this message.

Position: Supported
Outcome: Passed



Criminal Justice

- SB 159

Allowed for adult incarceration of a 17 year old for a nonviolent crime. Final amendments defined Aug 1, "child" means any person under the age 21, who commits a delinquent act on or after August 1, 2023, when the act is not a crime of violence and the act occurs before the person attains 18 of age. "Child" includes any person alleged to have committed any delinquent act prior to his 17 birthday.

Position: Opposed
Outcome: Passed

- SB 64

Establishes the Partners in Protecting Children Subcommittee to provide a forum for public agencies whose duties include responding to and investigating matters involving child abuse or neglect.

Position: Supported
Outcome: Passed



Criminalization of Healthcare

• HB 648

HB 648 by Rep. Firment House would bar those under 18 in Louisiana from receiving gender-affirming surgeries, puberty blocking medications and hormone treatments, and would punish health care professionals that provide such care to minors with the revocation of their license for a minimum of two years.

Position: Opposed
Outcome: Passed

• HB 424

HB81 by Rep. Crews directs that school employees or volunteers would not be allowed to use a student's preferred pronoun that differs from the gender listed on their birth certificate unless a student's parent provides written permission. Even if a parent does provide permission, the bill would allow a teacher to ignore it based on religious or moral reasons.

Position: Opposed
Outcome: Passed



Other Legislative Highlights

• HB 449

HB 449 by Rep. Willard will require the secretary of state to appoint an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) officer and create a Voting Accessibility Advisory Group within the Dept. of State. It also requires the secretary of state to include procedures for assisting voters with disabilities and requirements for all locations to accommodate rights of voters with disabilities, including the ADA guidelines.

Position: Supported
Outcome: Passed

• HB 131

HB 131 by Rep McCormick would have allowed Louisiana residents to carry a concealed firearm without a permit or training. The bill would also have resulted in a \$4.4 million decrease in revenue for law enforcement related to permit fees.

Position: Opposed
Outcome: Failed



2023 Budget Summary

The Louisiana Department of Health has not currently determined what the \$100 million state funding reduction in the agency's budget might mean for state health care, though it is expected to balloon and could possibly affect low-income residents' access to medical services.

The impact of the reduction has the potential to grow to \$500 million because the state uses its health care money to draw down more federal funding, advocates and the governor implied.

The legislators' health plan also directs the state to reduce some of the spending in one specific way. Of the \$100 million reduction, \$22 million must come from funding for the state's Medicaid disenrollment efforts.



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