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Dear ,

Are We There Yet?

If you're a parent, I'm certain you've heard that refrain from the backseat of the car on those family car trips. The question is also sometimes posed to those who monitor the legislature, asking for us to predict what's ultimately going to pass as well as what dangers lurk in the policy waters.

At this time, the best we can say, I think, is the bills for this session have been introduced because the bill filing deadline has passed. In addition, next week is the last week for the House or the Senate to hear "their" bills in the primary committee. There will be lengthy agendas next week as they plow through the issues presented. There have been 1,184 bills introduced. In addition, 60 either Senate or House Concurrent Resolutions have been introduced and get placed on the ballot next November. Please count your blessings that will not happen. There's plenty of ideas floating around for debate, but we'll probably see between 250 to 300 bills passed by the time session adjourns sometime in May. Remember the Legislature's 100th day of session is April 22nd. Do you think they'll be done by then?

On the policy front we've seen a few interesting items be presented. Listed below are four items which give you a flavor of issues being considered.

HB 2324 would repeal last year's expansion of AHCCCS to 133% FPL and repeal the hospital assessment. Yep, this bill cleared committee, but its future is uncertain at best. So, let's keep an eye on it, but don't panic yet. Another bill seeking to "control" AHCCCS' growth is **HB 2367** that would require AHCCCS to submit a waiver to the federal government to establish a workfare program for all able-bodied recipients. The bill would impose a 5 year limit on health benefits for able-bodied adults. Sponsors are trying to reflect what's required over on the welfare program. The bill would also impose higher co-payment fees for use of ER for non-ER

care. This bill also cleared the committee, but the likelihood of federal approval is slim.

HB 2508 and **SB 1309** are attempts to require Navigators and Certified Application Counselors (CACs) to be registered or licensed by the Department of Insurance as well as fingerprinted. Bill sponsors are concerned that Navigators or CACs would release information and an individual's identity would be stolen. It's a worry about how Obamacare is being implemented by the states. A recent federal court in Missouri found the state's effort to regulate a Navigator or a CAC in a state that participates in the Federal Facilitated Marketplace (like Arizona) is contrary to federal law. We expect one of these bills will pass and possibly be challenged in court.

Listed below is a quick review of the DHS, DES and AHCCCS budgets. Both DHS and AHCCCS presented their budgets this past week before the Senate and House Appropriation Committees. DES will be presenting on Tuesday and Wednesday next week. Remember you can watch the live proceedings from your home or office by simply going to legislative [website](#) and clicking on the "live proceedings" button on the left. Where we'll end up on the budget cannot yet be predicted. Legislators haven't rolled up their sleeves to begin budget negotiations.

Governor's Request on AHCCCS allows for increases due restoration and expansion of the AHCCCS program as approved last year with adjustments are made in caseload growth, an increase in federal matching funds and 3% increase in the capitation rate. The freeze on the original KidsCare program is continued.

The legislative staff responsible for preparing budgets for the Legislature is the Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) and their budgets are considered baseline and do not make any policy changes until the legislature acts. **JLBC** for **AHCCCS** continues the restoration and expansion of the AHCCCS program with adjustments made for caseload growth, FMAP increase and capitation rate of 3%.

For **DHS** the **Governor** has requested an overall agency increase of \$58.2 M, a \$1.3 M increase for Alzheimer Research, \$65.0 M increase to DBHS to reflect capitation increase, caseload growth & federal matching fund increase, and then the special line items such as supported housing, Mental Health First Aid, non-19 SMI services & crisis services are unchanged.

JLBC in the meantime recommends an overall funding is

increased by \$64.9 M due to formula adjustments, increases from the ACA, \$16.4 M for expansion & restoration and the special line items such as supported housing, Mental Health First Aid, non-19 SMI services & crisis services are unchanged.

For **DES Governor's** has focused heavily on increased funding for CPS including funds for this current fiscal year (already approved) for new staff, new staff to allow for a 100% investigation rate for CPS calls in Maricopa & Pima counties, increased funding for ER/residential placement for children removed from homes, funding for support services and adoption services, \$10 M to replace the computer system used by CPS, \$25.0 M to establish the new CPS agency. There is no new funding for child care, domestic violence prevention, coordinated hunger nor homeless prevention. Some new funds are requested for staff to assure accuracy of SNAP and TANF applications to prevent fraud and new funds to deal with a growing Adult Protective Service calls.

JLBC in meantime has not allocated any funds for a new CPS agency (remember that's a policy decision that the Legislature must adopt before inclusion in the baseline budget) and no funding for child care, domestic violence prevention, coordinated hunger, nor homeless prevention. There's funds adjustments over in Developmental Disability to reflect caseload and federal matching fund changes and \$49.9 M change for children support services.

Sadly, we're **not close** yet. Most of the items that we've seen are interesting and sometimes confusing, but often more focused on debate of political philosophy or the role of government as well as chasing headlines, not the business of governing. We simply haven't gotten to the main event, yet. Stay tuned!!

Updates on ACA, Restoration & Expansion

While the website for Affordable Care Act's initial rollout was very rocky back in October, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius on Friday announced that the national enrollment was nearly 3.3 million people. We're now moving into the closing days of this year's open enrollment period which is **March 31st**. In Arizona, 43,493 individuals have enrolled and selected their insurance plan by February 1st.

If you need assistance enrolling or have questions, you can call the local 211 to be directed to a local agency in your

neighborhood to find a Navigator or Certified Application Counselor to help you with the enrollment process. You can also call 1-800-318-2596 or go to www.healthcare.gov to start an online application.

By January 10th, on restoration and expansion side of the equation, Arizona saw 98,203 individuals had been approved for AHCCCS. Of this total 1,369 individuals were at the higher incomes of 100 to 133% of poverty. The vast majority of the newly enrolled individuals were childless adults below the poverty level.

Lots still needs to be done, but there are items of good news to be shared. Here's a clip you may find helpful on this [issue](#).

MEET MHA of AZ's BOARD MEMBERS



Tammy Wray is our newest board member at MHA-AZ. She is a second-generation Phoenician and has never left the neighborhood she was born! Tammy is married to Bob Lord, a local blogger and small business and estate-planning attorney. They have seven kids, one son-in-law, one grandbaby, and four dogs.

Tammy has been an attorney with the Maricopa County Public Defender's Office since 1997. Currently, she's part of the Criminal Mental Health unit, specializing in mental health probation, competency and guilty-except-insane issues. Tammy became interested in the intersection between mental illness and criminal involvement back in 2002, as one of the inaugural participants in Maricopa County's mental health probation compliance court. Since that time, she's represented clients in every therapeutic/problem solving court in Maricopa County including Mental Health Court, Drug Court, Domestic Violence Court, DUI Court, Veteran, and Juvenile Transfer Offender Court. Since 2006, she has also represented Maricopa County clients before the Psychiatric Security Review Board, under forensic commitments at the

Arizona State Hospital. Tammy trains other attorneys on mental health issues, works closely with probation, mental health care providers, and families to ensure the best possible release plans and maximize her clients' chances of success in the community.

She's also served on the Maricopa County Human Rights Committee for the Mentally Ill and the boards of directors for Triple R Behavioral Health and Lifewell. Tammy is a long-time advocate of evidence-based, practical, and cost-effective approaches to making sure that every member of our community gets the care that they need.

Upcoming Community Events

"Getting to know Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care", the new RBHA for Maricopa County as of April 1st, is hosting a series of neighborhood community forums. Food, giveaways, games and kids' activities will be provided at each event. The dates are:

- **February 26th from 3-6 pm** at the Disability Empowerment Center at 5025 E. Washington, Phoenix
- **March 5th from 3-6 pm** at People of Color Network Comunidad Site at 1035 E. Jefferson, Phoenix.
- **March 26th from 3-6 pm** at Partners in Recovery at 4330 E. University Dr. in Mesa.
- **April 16th from 3-6 pm** at Partners in Recovery at 5625 W. Bell Rd., in Glendale.
- **April 23 from 3-6 pm** at Mountain Health and Wellness at 625 N. Plaza Dr. in Apache Junction.

Wednesday, April 30th: Devereux Arizona will host an inaugural REACH Conference at the Desert Willow Conference Center in Phoenix. The conference is targeted for behavioral health, early childhood and child welfare professionals as well as K-12 educators and school psychologists. Early bird registration fee is \$79 will end on February 28th. The regular fee of \$99 ends on April 24th. Details on the event can be found by linking [here](#).

Ottawa University has a series of professional growth workshops that may be of interest. Links can be found [here](#). A sample of their offerings include: Trauma Sensitive Treatment led by Dr. Robert Rhoton on Tuesday, **March 4th** from 9 am to 4 pm at the Queen Creek Communiversity. For details on this and other offerings please follow the link above.

The Apache Junction Drug Prevention Coalition will be celebrating AJ Substance Abuse Reduction & Next Steps on Wednesday, **February 26th** from 9 am to noon at Mountain View Lutheran Church, 2122 S. Goldfield Rd. in Apache Junction. Please RSVP to Barbara Plante, 480-288-6195.

On **March 7th and 8th**, Arizona Autism United will host their 4th annual "Transdisciplinary Autism Conference" which is an event for parents and professionals. This year's conference includes an informative lineup of nationally renowned speakers and local experts over a wide range of topics for parents and professionals of all backgrounds. There is a cost associated with the event. For details can be found by linking [here](#).

We invite your participation and sharing of this newsletter by forwarding to your friends and colleagues. If they wish to receive the free newsletter, encourage them to simply click on the link [here](#). Let's share the word. Let's get involved.

Eddie L. Sissons
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