



## Memo

**To:** Affiliate Liaisons  
**From:** Scott Curtis  
 Haley Brase  
**Date:** February 18, 2025  
**Subject:** February Liaison Report

- **Health Comes First:** Unfortunately, Humana has stopped negotiations and forced MercyOne out of network with Humana Medicare Advantage Plans out of network effective January 1, 2025. Visit [MercyOne.org/Humana](https://www.mercyone.org/Humana) for more information.
- **Great Iowa Nurses:** Congratulations to our critical access hospital nurses named among the Great Iowa Nurses:
  - **Kylie Bluhm**, Franklin General Hospital
  - **Mikasia Jacobsen**, Manning Regional Healthcare Center
  - **Deb Lefler**, Knoxville Hospital and Clinics
  - **Amanda Phillips**, Knoxville Hospital and Clinics
  - **Tammy Williams**, Palo Alto County Health System
- **CHARTIS Top 100:** The CHARTIS Center for Rural Health recently released its annual list of the [top 100 critical access hospitals](#) in the nation for 2025. We are pleased to recognize two MercyOne affiliates on the esteemed list:
  - Hancock County Health System – Britt
  - Van Diest Medical Center – Webster City (third consecutive year)
 Find marketing materials [here](#).
- **Statewide Rural Governance Meeting:** The statewide governance call including all our critical access hospital board members and CEOs will be held on Friday, March 7 from noon to 1:30 p.m. via Teams. Key topics will include an update from Bob Ritz on MercyOne's current state, this year's related party cost allocation process, legislative priorities for the year, the latest on our Health Comes First initiative and open forum. This meeting will be recorded if you are unable to attend.
- **Mercy College of Health Sciences** announces campaign to raise \$15 million for new nursing school as part of its mission to become the 'school of choice.' The new building will include the latest technology and equipment to enhance the college's ability to graduate top students to fill the more than 3,500 openings for nurses listed on the Iowa Workforce Development website. Read the [Business Record article](#) for more information.

- **Advocacy Update:** Please see the separate Advocacy Update insert.
- **IHA Hospital Day on the Hill:** Please sign up for IHA Hospital Day on the Hill. Let [mary.cownie@mercyhealth.com](mailto:mary.cownie@mercyhealth.com) know if you plan to attend, so we can work on outreach to your lawmakers. Use this QR code to register.



# Advocacy update



MercyOne is the largest health care system in Iowa. As we strengthen our advocacy structure across Iowa, we will be engaging with our policymakers on a regular basis or as necessary to:

- Influence health policy at all levels of government.
- Build relationships to better inform and persuade policymakers to develop, change or maintain policy to meet the needs of our industry.
- Identify the regulatory challenges within our organization, assess the issue and proactively bring forth solutions.

For the 2025 Iowa Legislative Session, here are the following priorities we are focused on as a system:

## ***Grow workforce***

### **Support incentives for health care recruitment and retainment**

- Leverage \$30 million Workforce Opportunity Fund; continue to support policies that strengthen and expand exposure to the health care field; education/training pathways and retention efforts to keep high-demand jobs in Iowa

### **Support efforts to prevent workplace violence**

- Pursue policies that improve health care workforce safety and reduce violence against our colleagues, students and volunteers within our facilities

### **Strengthen physician recruitment and retainment**

- Evaluate approaches to our physician pathways in Iowa, along with our residency and fellowship programs, to create capacity and optimize retainment in Iowa

## ***Sustain our not-for-profit faith-based Mission***

### **Pursue strategies to hold payers accountable**

- Support prior authorization relief to reduce provider administrative burden
- Support increased accountability in payer payment policies Ensure Patient Access (Pharmacy Benefit Manager Reform)
- Strengthen fair payment for pharmacy and pharmacist services

### ***Improve community health***

#### **Sustain enhanced Medicaid reimbursement**

- Maintain use of hospital provider participation funds to finance Medicaid hospital quality programs and improve access to care for Medicaid managed care beneficiaries

#### **Improve access to maternal care services**

- Collaborate with the State to identify a regional care delivery approach, specifically for maternal care services

In addition to above, we are fortunate in Iowa to have a Governor who is leading the way in her policy recommendations. Here is the link to her bill, and a summary below: [HSB 191](#)

### ***Health care workforce***

- Consolidate the state's five existing health care professional loan repayment and recruitment programs, more than double the funding to \$10 million, and open the programs to all eligible applicants including those educated or trained out of state
- Create approximately 115 new residency slots over four years at the state's 14 teaching hospitals by leveraging additional federal graduate medical education funding through the state's Medicaid program
- Invest \$3 million in Health Care Credentialing grants for employers to train and educate nurses, CNAs and LPNs

### **Maternal health**

- Invest \$642,000 into unbundled Medicaid maternal rates
- Increase Medicaid rates for certified nurse midwives and add doula services as a covered Medicaid benefit
- Seek federal approval for a Medicaid waiver to provide rate flexibility with a goal of incentivizing a hub-and-spoke model of care

### **Cancer research**

- Invest \$1 million to establish a new partnership between the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and the University of Iowa to research the behavioral, genetic and environmental factors driving Iowa's high cancer rate

### **Certificate of need**

- Eliminate the Health Facilities Council and shift the review to professional staff at IHHS
- Hire a health care economist at IHHS to support the CON process and help develop a report on the state's health care economy and CON process

### **Health information exchange**

- Provide IHHS with the authority to competitively procure and manage the state's health information exchange (HIE) network and replace the existing board with an advisory committee.

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