

FRA Legislative meeting summary for 02/07/2025

The Florida Renal Association's (FRA) Legislative Committee met for the second time in 2025 on Friday February 7th. Below is a summary of the meeting led by FRA Legislative Chair Bob Loeper and FRA Lobbyist Ron Watson.

The meeting opened with a brief discussion of all the changes going on in Washington under the Trump administration and how that may have been overshadowing all the drama recently in Florida politics. Mr. Watson then started the meeting with the traditional News/Notes section established by former long-time FRA lobbyist Bob Reynolds.

NEWS and NOTES:

- **AHCA webinar date set for Friday February 14 at 11:00am.** The FRA has been conducting yearly home modality webinars for the Medicaid Managed Care Plans in Florida for many years, as directed by budget proviso language we continue to support. We have historically made the presentation in either November or December but decided to present it later this year to get better participation. Additionally, the new Medicaid contracts became effective Feb. 1st, so we are hoping to have some of the new managed care plans participate. (See details below)
- **Special Session Showdown / Drama** - Governor Ron DeSantis called a special session to begin on Monday January 27 with very little notice to the Legislative leaders and with no prior agreement on issues. Governor DeSantis included immigration, condo and Constitutional amendment ballot reforms in his call. However, Legislative leaders said it was not needed and premature. The negative rhetoric between the Executive and Legislative branches kept ramping up and what was going to happen was a closely held secret. The House and Senate both gavelled in and then immediately gavelled out, which procedurally killed all the proposed bills supported by the Governor. However, they called their own special session and limited it to illegal immigration, promptly passing a bill strongly opposed by the Governor who called them weak. The Legislature also overrode one of his budget vetoes from last year, which is the 1st override of a veto in over 15 years! The Governor went on the road campaign style and threatened primaries for those who opposed him!! This public feud is rare in Florida politics with republican supermajorities now dominating. However, we are hearing there may be another special session next week with a compromise bill.
- **Governor DeSantis Appointments** – The Governor will have a historic opportunity to appoint a US Senator (he chose AG Ashley Moody), a CFO, which is a statewide elected cabinet position, as well as the new Attorney General to replace Moody. And his Lt Governor, Jeanette Nunez just accepted a job as the President of FIU, so he will also be replacing his #2 soon!!!
- **Special Election Results / Drama.** The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Jimmy Patronis won the primary for Congress district 1, Pensacola area. In the palm beach seat, recently elected Sen. Randy Fine (R-Palm Bay), who was in the House for 8 years and just moved to the Senate, also won his primary and will most likely head to Washington. The general election is April 1st. In more drama, Rep. Debbie Mayfield who was the Senator prior to Fine and won election to the House in November planned to return to the Senate but was denied by the Elections office due to “term limits”. She is suing and blaming the Governor for political payback!! That primary is also April 1st, so the clock is ticking!
- **Governor releases his proposed budget on the last day late at night!**

Bills filed for the 2025 session. Bills are starting to flow out of bill drafting. There are about 500 or so bills filed to date, and the Social Workers Licensure Compact bill ([HB 27](#)) is one of them. Another bill has been filed since we last spoke on nursing staffing, [SB 332](#) and [HB 349](#) seem to target hospital systems. The other bill we are tracking/supporting is one on “Food desserts” or [HB 89](#). This bill falls directly in line with our “Food is Medicine” topic on our 2025 Legislative Issue Sheet. Mr. Watson reviews bills filed daily and will discuss anything that affects our industry moving forward.

Committee weeks were recently held in Tallahassee; however, one week was canceled due to the ice storm and the other was impacted by the special session call. There are only two weeks left prior to session starting in March. Very few bills have been heard, but the social worker licensure compact (HB 27) will be up next week in the [Health Professionals and Programs sub](#), and the FRA will support its passage.

No additional updates on proposed rules. One deals with organ transplant facility regulation and the other is the main dialysis rule which references the **Florida Medicaid Dialysis Services Coverage Policy**. **The Organ Transplant draft rule** was created by a seldom used negotiated rule making committee. The two-day meeting produced a draft proposal, which we are still waiting to see officially published. The second rule proposal updates the dialysis coverage policy for the first time since 2015! It clarified Acute Kidney Injury (AKI) is included in the coverage policy and continued the no co-pay language. We suggested changing the present exclusion of self-administered erythropoietin to specifically include this coverage instead. We stressed Medicare presently covers self-administration and that with the focus on home therapies, making patients come in-center for this injection is costly, time consuming and will lead to more transportation problems. *We are still awaiting these draft rules to be published.*

New Medicaid Managed Care Contracts were implemented on February 1st. AHCA has gone from 11 regions to 9 regions and Mr. Watson described some of the changes. Florida Community Care, Humana Medical Plan, Simply Healthcare and Sunshine Health operate in all 9 regions. Aetna Comp is in 3 regions, Community Care Plan is in 5 regions, United Healthcare is in 3 regions and Molina is only in Miami-Dade. Continuity of Care was discussed including keeping appointments, payment and prescriptions moving through the transition.

Kidney Day Update. Mr. Watson was busy passing out Kidney Day Flyers during committee weeks which details our 19th annual Kidney Day at the Capital on Sunday, March 9th and Monday March 10th. He was also gathering email addresses for all the new legislative aides in anticipation of Kidney Day. Legislators of the year have been decided w [Sen. Jay Trumbell \(R-Panama City\)](#) and [Rep. Adam Anderson \(R-Tarpon Springs\)](#). We will also honor [Rep. Webster Barnaby \(R-DeLand\)](#) who is on dialysis and [former Senate President Kathleen Passidomo \(R-Naples\)](#). Additionally, the 2025 Legislative Issue Sheet, has been formalized and the text can be seen below.

Legislative Issues for 2025

- **Organ Transplants** – The Florida Renal Association (FRA) is working with “More Transplants – More Life” to ensure as many lifesaving **organ donations** occur in Florida as possible. We want to encourage both living organ donations as well as increasing registrations of organ donors. We support corporate tax credits for organ donation expenses; state employees administrative leave for living organ donation; additional organ donation registry education; and clarifying insurance preexisting condition provisions may not exclude living organ donors.

- **Expanded Use of Home Modalities for Dialysis Treatments** – The FRA strongly supports dialysis treatments administered at home (*Peritoneal Dialysis and/or Home Hemodialysis*) in lieu of in-clinic dialysis. The FRA hosts a yearly educational webinar with the Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA), as directed by **budget proviso language**, for the Medicaid Managed Care plans educating them on the cost savings and benefits to the patients of home dialysis. If a patient starts directly on home modalities, they are immediately eligible for Medicare, thereby creating cost avoidance for the state Medicaid program. The FRA supports additional funding for home modality education and the funding of self-administration of ESAs. (see below)
- **Improved / Accountable Transportation Options** - Consistent and timely transportation is the **number one complaint** with our dialysis patients. Most in-clinic dialysis patients require three treatments a week that can be 4 hours in length. Patients often wait for additional hours before/after treatment and may miss scheduled appointments completely due to frequent transportation issues, which can lead to hospitalizations and major preventable cost. Transportation barriers are another major reason to encourage home dialysis options.
- **Pharmaceutical / Drug Coverage** – The FRA encourages AHCA to support Medicaid funding of self-administration of Erythropoietin (or ESAs) for end-stage renal disease (or ESRD) patients on home modalities. Medicare allows this cost saving and necessary coverage that decreases transportation cost and improves outcomes, reduces hospitalizations and need for blood transfusions. The federal focus on moving dialysis patients to home modalities necessitates this inclusion for Medicaid.
- **Food is Medicine** – When ESRD leads to dialysis treatments, dietitians/nutritionists are a critical part of the care team to help overhaul your diet by focusing on harmful choices. Improper nutrition leads directly to poorer outcomes and additional expenses. The FRA strongly supports the concept of “Food is Medicine” and supports a pilot project in Medicaid to cover purchases and deliveries of prescribed health-promoting foods. We also support the elimination of food deserts through creative cooperation that creates small foot-print grocery stores with healthy fruits and vegetables in low-income areas.
- **Social Worker Licensure Compact**
 - SUPPORT
 - **HB 27** by Reps. Hunschofsky & Koster and
 - **SB 220** by Sen. Harrell

Social Work Licensure Compact; specifying requirements for state participation in the compact; requiring member states to designate the categories of social work licensure which are eligible for issuance of a multistate license in such states; establishing the Social Work Licensure Compact Commission; etc.

OTHER ISSUES:

- **Third Party Payer of Insurance Premiums** – The FRA supports the continuation of third-party payments of insurance premiums for those who qualify for such assistance programs. Any

disruption of these programs could increase the enrollment of Medicaid coverage for ESRD services.

- **Medi-Gap** – Florida was a leader in the nation with passage of a Medi-Gap plan that allows coverage for the disabled and ESRD population under age 65. There are now 16 other states who have copied our program with more being suggested. We support the continuation of Medi-Gap.
- **Medicaid Program Fee Increase** – The FRC supports a Medicaid program that provides Medicaid coverage for those with ESRD who do not qualify for Medicare or commercial insurance. The MMA plans must pay the minimum established by AHCA, but FRA supports raising reimbursements to equal Medicare rates.