



Meeting Minutes | Health Care Policy Committee

Wednesday, March 1, 2023 | 10:30 a.m.

202 Arbor Lake Dr., Columbia, SC 29223 | First Floor Conference Room

Minutes approved June 21, 2023

Board Members Present for All or a Portion of the Meeting: Mr. Steve Heisler, PEBA Board Chairman Joe “Rocky” Pearce, and Committee Chairman Alex Shissias.

Board Members Absent: Mr. John Sowards

Others Present for All or a Portion of the Meeting: Peggy Boykin, Amber Carter, Justin Ellis, James Manning, Heather Muller, Laura Smoak, Rob Tester, Travis Turner, Justin Werner, Chuck Wilson, and Heather Young from the South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA); Jesse Epting, Dr. Tripp Jennings, Matt Shaffer, and Carmen Wilson from BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina; and Sam Griswold from the State Retirees Association of South Carolina.

Others Present for All or a Portion of the Meeting Via Virtual Means: Angie Warren from PEBA.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Alex Shissias called the PEBA Health Care Policy Committee (Committee) meeting to order at 10:30 a.m., and stated that the public meeting notice was posted in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes – December 7, 2022

Mr. Steve Heisler made a motion, which was seconded by PEBA Board Chairman Rocky Pearce, and passed unanimously, to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2022, Committee meeting.

III. State Health Plan Benchmark’s Review

Mr. Rob Tester, Insurance Policy Director, presented the State Health Plan benchmarking review in which key SHP measures are compared with peer and national benchmarks. Mr. Tester reviewed the SHP enrollment as of March 2023; the SHP growth and expenditure per member to national trends; the SHP contribution rate increases versus the Consumer Price Index growth for medical care; and the 2022 average monthly total premiums.

Mr. Tester also discussed the 2022 average annual deductible; the 2021 average annual gross plan cost per active employee; and the 2023 composite monthly premiums. Mr. Tester stated that the State Health Plan continues to compare favorably to other public and private employers, regionally and nationally.

IV. Telehealth: Growth, Opportunities, and Challenges

Dr. Tripp Jennings from BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, presented on telehealth's progress as well as the challenges that it presents to payers. The use of telehealth grew exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and became more established as a regular feature in health plans. Dr. Jennings stated that at the height of the pandemic, 50 percent to 80 percent of medical visits were conducted by telehealth, compared to one percent before the pandemic.

Dr. Jennings stated that telehealth addresses issues such as clinical shortages; the aging population; access in rural and underserved communities; travel time; delayed treatment; and absenteeism at work. Telehealth can also reduce barriers to access; increase efficiency for providers; reduce delays in care; increase patient satisfaction; improve health outcomes; and virtual accessibility.

Dr. Jennings discussed challenges that the telehealth industry presents including telehealth reimbursement; broadband; interoperability or open access environment; mandated participation in Health Information Exchange in South Carolina; credentialing; licensure; and state and federal telehealth policies.

Dr. Jennings stated that there has been a constant and steady increase in telehealth use in South Carolina Medicaid participants, but there has not been a large improvement in health outcomes.

Dr. Jennings reviewed telehealth legislative changes including permanent and temporary Medicare changes, and upcoming telehealth policy changes.

Dr. Jennings turned the discussion to the advantages and disadvantages of telehealth. Advantages include rural access; behavioral health treatment; pandemic treatment; and consumer acceptance. Disadvantages include increased fraud; waste and abuse; exacerbation of health disparities; clinician patient relationship; clinician burnout; cost; and misdiagnosis.

Dr. Jennings concluded his presentation by evaluating the future of telehealth including outcomes, digital health, and regulation clarity.

V. Old Business/Director's Report

Ms. Peggy Boykin, Executive Director, stated that she would provide the Director's Report at the full Board meeting.

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business, and upon a motion by Mr. Heisler, which was seconded by PEBA Board Chairman Pearce, and approved unanimously, the Committee meeting adjourned at 11:37 a.m.