

Government Relations Update – January 11, 2022

Pennsylvania Issues

Legislation

- **HB 2071:** Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority. The recent federal infrastructure bill signed into law by President Joe Biden (D) in November allocates \$100 million towards broadband expansion in Pennsylvania. On November 9, 2021, Representative Martin Causer (R-Cameron, McKean, Potter) introduced legislation establishing the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority to coordinate the Commonwealth's broadband expansion efforts and determine the appropriate allocation of the federal funds. The bill was passed by both chambers and signed into law by Governor Tom Wolf (D) on December 22, 2021.

Miscellaneous

- **Acting Secretary of Health:** On December 13, 2021, Acting Secretary of Health Alison Beam announced her resignation, effective December 31, 2021, and Governor Wolf immediately appointed Department of Health Executive Deputy Secretary Keara Klinepeter as her replacement. Ms. Beam had served as Acting Secretary since January 2021, when she replaced Dr. Rachel Levine. St. Luke's University Health Network has a good working relationship with Acting Secretary Klinepeter, and she visited St. Luke's Hospital – Sacred Heart Campus in 2019.
- **Allentown Mayor:** On January 3, 2022, Matt Tuerk (D) was sworn in as the Mayor of the City of Allentown. Mayor Tuerk worked for the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation before launching his mayoral campaign. St. Luke's leaders have met with Mayor Tuerk and are looking forward to continuing our positive relationship with the city.
- **Bethlehem Mayor:** On January 3, 2022, J. William Reynolds (D) was sworn in as the Mayor of the City of Bethlehem. Mayor Reynolds has been a city councilman for the past 15 years. He is a history and government teacher at William Allen High School. His wife, Dr. Natalie Bieber, is a primary care physician with Lehigh Valley Health Network, and her office is based in Easton.

Federal Issues

- **CMS Vaccine Requirements:** On November 4, 2021, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) published a rule requiring that healthcare workers at facilities participating in Medicare and Medicaid be fully vaccinated by January 4, 2022. On November 30, 2021, a federal district court in Louisiana issued a preliminary injunction preventing enforcement of the rule in 14 states. The mandate was similarly stayed in 11 other states in two separate lawsuits. The injunctions were upheld on appeal, CMS further appealed the matters to the United States Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on January 7, 2022.

On December 28, 2021, CMS announced that it would begin enforcing its vaccine mandate at facilities located in the 25 states where the mandate is not currently enjoined, including Pennsylvania, and CMS released guidelines for the mandate. According to the guidelines, by January 27, 2022, facilities in those states must ensure that all staff have at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine or have a qualified exemption, or face termination from the Medicare and Medicaid health insurance programs. By the end of February, staff must be fully vaccinated or have a qualified exemption. CMS has authorized its surveyors and accrediting organizations to begin surveying for compliance with the vaccine mandate on February 28, 2022.