

# the Reporter

Illinois Hospital Association



April 2, 2007

## CON EXTENDED FOR TWO MONTHS

As the *Reporter* was going to press (on March 30), final action was expected on a two-month extension of the Certificate of Need (CON) program. The House and Senate passed **SB611** to extend CON until May 31 – the scheduled end of the spring session – and sent the bill to the Governor for his signature.

Meanwhile a group of legislators is now working on additional legislation on CON – to be passed before the end of the spring session – to extend CON to August 2008 and to establish a task force to consider potential reforms, modifications, and a longer-term extension of the program.

## IHA, INA AGREE ON PATIENT ACUITY

IHA and the Illinois Nurses Association have reached an agreement on a bill that addresses hospitals' staffing plans based on each hospital's patient acuity model, with recommendations from a nursing care committee, composed of 50% direct-care nurses. The Patient Acuity Nurse Staffing Act, **Amendment #2 to SB867**, reflects the policy position adopted by the IHA Board earlier this month. The bill passed out of the Senate Human Services Committee and was expected to be voted on by the Senate on March 30 as the *Reporter* was going to press.

The Board accepted the recommendation of the Policy Council to support nurse staffing legislation that recognizes the advisory role of the nurse care committee in hospitals' nurse staffing planning and that takes into account the wide variety of approaches related to patient acuity methods used by hospitals, both hospital-developed and commercial products.

IHA continues to strongly oppose mandated nurse staffing ratios. Members are urged to

continue contacting their legislators to oppose nurse staffing ratio legislation and can send emails or letters to their legislators from IHA's web site.

## IHA STOPS SURGICAL HOSPITAL BILL

IHA is opposing **HB829**, a bill that would allow post-surgical recovery centers to become specialty surgical hospitals. Such centers would not have to meet the same standards that full-service hospitals must meet nor would they be subject to Certificate of Need.

In a committee hearing this week, IHA testified against the bill, noting that if limited-service hospitals are allowed to proliferate and attract patients with less complex conditions who have the ability to pay, that would threaten the ability of community hospitals to provide services such as emergency departments, trauma centers and neonatal ICUs, which all lose money. Since no action was taken, the bill remains in the House Human Services Committee. Members are urged to talk to their representatives during the Legislature's spring recess (first two weeks of April) and urge them to oppose **HB829**.

## MRSA LEGISLATION ADVANCES

Two bills that address the MRSA issue are moving through the General Assembly. The Senate approved **SB233** on a vote of 46 to 4, while the House passed a similar measure, **HB378**, on a vote of 108-0 earlier in the month. Both bills would require MRSA screening for all ICU patients and at-risk patients as defined by each hospital; isolation of MRSA-infected patients; adherence to hand hygiene guidelines; and reporting of MRSA infection rates to the Illinois Department of Public Health.

## UPDATE ON TAX-EXEMPTION CASES

The Illinois Supreme Court has declined to hear an appeal by Community Health Care, a federally qualified health center in Rock Island. The center was seeking the appeal to reverse an Appellate Court ruling that the clinic does not qualify as a charitable organization entitled to a property tax exemption, even though it provides free or discounted care to 27% of its patients. Denial of a petition for an appeal does not mean that the Supreme Court agrees with the appellate decision, and such a denial has no precedential effect. The Supreme Court typically grants less than 5% of petitions for appeal.

IHA is disappointed the appeal was not granted because of confusion in Illinois about what is required for a charitable property tax exemption. Even though this case does not involve a hospital and is different from hospital cases in some ways, it would have been an opportunity for the Supreme Court to clear up this confusion.

Meanwhile, the Circuit Court of Sangamon County has accepted amicus briefs filed by IHA, AHA, and leading state and national Catholic organizations in support of the appeal by **Provena Covenant Medical Center**, Urbana, challenging the Department of Revenue's denial of the hospital's property tax exemption. The briefs can be seen by [clicking here](#) (password required).

## BRIEFLY NOTED...

✓ The U.S. Senate has passed a supplemental spending bill that includes hospital-backed language by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) that would place a two-year moratorium on CMS moving forward with the Medicaid rule on intergovernmental transfers and certified public expenditures. The bill also would prevent the agency from working on any rules related to eliminating payments for graduate medical education under the Medicaid program.

✓ We urge Illinois hospitals to take part in Cover the Uninsured Week, April 23-29. Events will be held across the U.S. to promote the importance of children's health coverage, support reauthorization of SCHIP, and enroll uninsured children in public health programs. For more information, go to [www.Covertheuninsured.org](http://www.Covertheuninsured.org).

✓ IHA, **Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center**, Mattoon, the Illinois chapter of Hospitals for a Healthy Environment, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will present a workshop on evaluating and improving the energy performance of medical facilities. The program will take place April 11 at Sarah Bush Lincoln. For more information or to register, contact Beth McKay-Anaya at 630-276-5510 or [emckay-anaya@ihastaff.org](mailto:emckay-anaya@ihastaff.org). There is no charge for the workshop, but space is limited.

✓ A staff member, a physician, and a parent from Cincinnati Children's Hospital, which is nationally recognized for its leadership in engaging patients and families in quality and safety, will discuss their work at the first Learning Session of IHA's 2007 Patient Safety Learning Collaborative on April 20 at the Hilton in Lisle. Not a member of the Collaborative? Contact [Becky Steward](#) at 630-276-5585 to join.

✓ Join us for the 2007 Workforce Leadership Conference to promote workplace opportunity, increase awareness, and expand program capacity, while attracting and retaining a quality staff. The conference will be held April 11 at IHA's offices in Naperville, with videoconferencing to IHA in Springfield and **Pinckneyville Community Hospital**. For details, contact Dawn Wichmann at 630-276-5843, [dwichmann@ihastaff.org](mailto:dwichmann@ihastaff.org).