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AHCA Promotes a Cost-Effective, Transparent, and High-Quality Health Care System in 2021

TALLAHASSEE, FL – Today, the Agency for Health Care Administration highlighted over-the-year efforts to further Governor DeSantis' vision to transform Florida's health care system to be the most cost effective, transparent, and highest quality health care system in the nation. Throughout the year, the Agency continued to prioritize opportunities to further these goals.

“Over the past year, our Agency has worked around the clock to support Floridians,” said **Agency Secretary Simone Marsteller**. “Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis, the Agency has prioritized our seniors and most vulnerable, ensured resources are available to health care providers, protected our health care industry from heavy handed Federal mandates, and identified opportunities to increase the quality of care that is delivered to Floridians in need.”

Cost-Effective

In addition to leveraging Florida's buying power to deliver high quality care at the lowest cost to taxpayers, the Agency continues to identify new opportunities to increase access to high quality, cost-effective care for Floridians who need it most.

Leading the Nation through Florida's Canadian Prescription Drug Importation Program

- Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis, the Agency is shepherding efforts to increase access to essential medications for vulnerable Floridians while also saving taxpayer dollars through the Canadian Prescription Drug Importation Program.
- After working in partnership with the Trump Administration for over 18 months, the State of Florida submitted a Section 804 Importation Proposal (SIP) in November 2020. Florida's SIP is designed to fully comply with the FDA's regulatory requirements (which the state helped establish) and would improve access to essential medications some of the most vulnerable Floridians rely on.
- In May, Governor DeSantis announced that the state's secure licensed distribution facility is complete. Within 90 days of receiving FDA approval, the state will begin final implementation to provide safe, affordable prescription drugs to Floridians who need them most.



- In June, at the direction of Governor Ron DeSantis, the Agency filed an Amicus brief in support of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) final rule implementing Section 804 of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

Certificate of Need Repeal for Hospitals and Hospital Services

- In 2019, Governor DeSantis signed HB 21 which repealed Florida's antiquated certificate of need (CON) laws for hospitals. Prior to repeal, health care providers were unable to freely enter the marketplace. The repeal aims to increase competition and consumer choice.
- Since CON repeal, the Agency has received over 30 notices of intent to construct new hospitals. Additional health care facilities will spark innovation among providers and increase the available options to Floridians seeking care.

Investing in Florida Hospitals

- In October, the Agency received approval from the Legislative Budget Commission for an additional \$2.3 billion in budget authority to establish two new supplemental payment programs to support hospitals in providing high quality care. This includes the Hospital Direct Payment Program and the Indirect Medical Education Program.

Transparent

From day one, Governor DeSantis has worked to empower Floridians in making more informed health care decisions. The Agency is intently focused on identifying opportunities to support this effort through key transparency initiatives to increase accountability among insurers and providers.

Empowering Patients Through Transparency

- At the onset of his administration, the Governor directed the Agency to expedite the development of Florida's transparency web tools to offer facility-level pricing and quality information through [FloridaHealthFinder](#) and [Florida Health Price Finder](#).
- By linking quality and price information, Floridians have a clearer picture to make more informed health care decisions. Over the next year, the Agency plans to significantly update these websites through a centralized brand and online presence.
- The Governor's Freedom First Budget Recommendations invest nearly \$4 million to increase transparency in prescription drug prices. The funds support the modernization of Florida's prescription drug price transparency website known as MyFloridaRx and to complete additional analysis on Medicaid pharmacy claims for potential fraud, waste, and abuse.

Emergency Generator Dashboard

- In May, the Agency announced an improved transparency dashboard bringing accountability and clearer transparency to emergency power plans and the availability of onsite generators for all regulated nursing homes and assisted living facilities (ALFs).

Florida Health Care Connections (FX)

- The Agency is currently working to transform its legacy Medicaid Management Information System to enhance the provider and recipient experience, improve access to and quality of health care data, and enhance integration between state agencies that service similar populations.
- Although the project is initially focused on Florida's Medicaid program, it has the potential to transform the way all state health care agencies work with one another in sharing data and improving health care outcomes.

High-Quality

The Agency is focused on increasing the quality of care and outcomes for all Floridians, especially those residing in Long Term Care facilities. In support of the Governor's Seniors First strategy, the Agency continues to prioritize Florida's seniors for both emergency and non-emergency operations. Additionally, the Agency is focused on supporting health care provider workforce needs to ensure the highest quality care is received by Floridians.

Prioritizing Seniors First & COVID-19

- Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis, Florida was the first state in the nation to prioritize the vaccination of seniors. In support of the Seniors First initiative, the Agency continues to partner with the Florida Department of Health and Florida's long-term care facilities to ensure readily available access to both vaccines and therapeutics for our most vulnerable populations.
- The Agency received perfect scores from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) State Performance Standards System (SPSS) for federal fiscal year 2019. While measures were calculated, they were not scored for federal fiscal year 2020. The Agency saw continued success in federal fiscal year 2020, completing surveys on 99.6% of all nursing homes.

Increasing Access to COVID-19 Vaccines

- In November, The Agency was awarded the Spotlight Award from the National Association of Medicaid Directors for its work to enhance COVID-19 vaccination rates of Florida Medicaid members. The effort resulted in approximately 275,000 individuals getting vaccinated through proactive education opportunities rather than mandates.

Supporting Florida's Health Care Providers Recruit and Retain Staff

- The Agency created a temporary personal care attendant (PCA) program to assist nursing homes in addressing workforce challenges throughout the pandemic. After the program proved successful, the Governor signed HB 485 to make the program permanent, allowing nursing homes to employ individuals as noncertified nursing assistants while obtaining the appropriate on the job training necessary to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA).
- The Agency awarded \$1.8 million to the Florida Health Care Association to create the CaregiversFL program which was funded through the state's civil monetary penalty reinvestment program. CaregiversFL is a two-year effort to increase the number of

direct care workers, specifically Certified Nursing Assistants, into the long-term care profession. The program will include an interactive website with application information for interested job seekers.

- The Agency is leading efforts to invest over \$1.1 Billion to support home and community-based services. The funds will allow health care providers to recruit and retain staff to care for the most vulnerable and bolster the ability of eligible Floridians to receive care in a community-based setting.
- The Agency continues to support Florida's challenge against the Biden Administration's vaccine mandates, as it will not only damage the state's already stretched health care industry but impact our most vulnerable and their ability to receive health care services.

Improving Maternal Health Outcomes

- Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one-third of maternal deaths related to pregnancy or delivery complications occur in the postpartum period.
- The 2021-22 General Appropriations Act provided nearly \$240 Million to extend the maternal Medicaid coverage period from two to twelve months following delivery to reduce maternal mortality rates and improve health outcomes for both mothers and their infants.

Reducing Stigma Surrounding Mental Health

- In July, at the direction of First Lady Casey DeSantis, Secretary Marsteller presented the findings and recommendations of the Mental Health and Social Stigma in Minority Communities Work Group to the Florida Children's Cabinet.
- The findings highlighted opportunities to increase education about mental illness by partnering with Florida's faith-based communities and peer support groups.

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