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Tila Hubrecht's Capitol Report - Friday, April 1, 2016

APRIL 04TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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The Missouri House returned this week from the annual Spring Break. To date the House has seen more than 1,500 bills filed with nearly 450 House Bills already receiving committee approval. At this time the House has approved and sent to the Senate more than 150 bills, and so far only one of the bills has received final approval. The number of bills sent to the Senate is a significant increase from last session when the House had approved just more than 90 bills entering the break. This high volume of bills moving through the process means all legislators will have a heavy workload from now until the end of session.

We passed two bills which I feel will have a direct impact on improving health care for all Missourians. I will share a summary of these two bills from the House communications office.

House Approves “Step Therapy” Measure to Improve Access to Vital Medications (HB 2029)

Missourians with chronic illnesses would have better access to the medications they need under legislation approved by the Missouri House this week. The legislation is designed to prevent redundant “step therapy” so that patients who switch health insurance benefits are not forced to try medications that have already proven to be ineffective before being allowed to use medication that works.

The legislation approved by the House simply ensures that a patient will not have to go

through the process of trying multiple medications again simply because of an insurance change. In effect, it makes it so the medicine prescribed by the patient's doctor is the medicine the patient is allowed to take.

The legislation received overwhelming bipartisan support and is now on its way to the Senate for consideration.

Expanding Access to Health Care (HB 1923)

The Missouri House approved legislation this week designed to modernize health care in Missouri, and improve the level of care provided by the state's system of Medicaid. The legislation brings telehealth services in Missouri into state statute and works to bring greater access to health care to Missourians in rural and underserved areas.

The bill would update Missouri's laws on Medicaid reimbursement in regard to telehealth services so that more health care professionals could provide telehealth care to Medicaid recipients. Supporters of the bill say it is an important change that will allow patients to receive care without having to travel long distances. They noted the change could also result in a significant cost savings. In 2015 the state's Medicaid program allocated more than \$40 million for use in providing non-emergency medical transportation to take patients in underserved areas to see specialists.

LAST UPDATED ON APRIL 04TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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