



## **FROM COVERAGE TO CARE: WHAT HAPPENED TO HEALTHCARE DURING FLORIDA'S 2026 SESSION**

This session, we navigated two strategic priorities, pushing forward proactive legislation and fighting to defeat harmful legislation. Working closely in multiple coalitions, we were ultimately successful in defeating two major harmful bills and getting some movement on proactive bills. We also strengthened existing lawmaker relationships, initiated new lawmaker and staff relationships, and engaged with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, as well as multiple media outlets regarding the Agency of Health Care Administration (AHCA's) failure to implement the expansion of KidCare. We are in a strong position to continue to build up our coalitions, refine our advocacy strategy and bill language, and continue to position FHJP as the leader in Florida health policy.

While the normal session has wrapped up, our legislature has had three special sessions since then. During a special session on redistricting, the Legislature passed a new congressional map that reduced the number of districts widely considered competitive or accessible to Democratic candidates from eight to four. The legislature also had a special session to pass the budget and one to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot that will have voters decide whether or not to cut property taxes. That proposal is concerning for many reasons and will have a detrimental effect on healthcare systems that receive funding from property taxes. Other services impacted could include schools, infrastructure, public safety, and more.

The final budget included:

- Total: \$114.5 billion
- Health and Human Services: \$49.2 Billion
- Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)
  - Total: \$38.0 billion
  - Fully Fund Florida's Medicaid and KidCare Programs
  - Florida Healthy Kids Combined-Risk Model Premium Stabilization - \$27.8 million
  - Rural Health Transformation Program - \$209.9 million; 14 positions
  - Medicaid Provider Rate Increases - \$205.9 million
  - Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) Expansion - \$38.4 million
  - Graduate Medical Education - \$13.5 million
  - Enhanced Provider Network Audits - \$10.8 million
  - Medicaid Management Information Systems - \$23.4 million
- Department of Children and Families (DCF)
  - Total: \$4.8 billion
- AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) funding: \$75 million (participants capped at 21,000)
- The House sought \$250,000 to study the effects of leaving the federal healthcare exchange, where residents can shop for Affordable Care Act plans, but the Senate didn't agree to it.



# FLORIDA HEALTH JUSTICE PROJECT



## **PROSPECTIVE BILLS:**

- SB 1222/HB 1271 Medical Debt (Senator Rodriguez/Representative Nixon)
  - Strengthens medical debt protections by adding definitions for “medical debt collectors” and “medical debt creditors” to Florida statutes, prohibits specified collection actions, such as threatening arrest, foreclosing on property, garnishing wages, and reporting to consumer agencies, limited interest on medical debt to 2 percent per year
  - This bill did not move, but we will be filing it again next session. Senator Rodriguez is interested in sponsoring it again.
- SB 514/HB 515 Doula Support for Healthy Births Pilot Program (Senator Osgood/Representative Campbell)
  - Creates the Doula Support for Healthy Births pilot program in Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties, targeting pregnant and postpartum women who have overcome or are overcoming substance use disorders.
  - This bill passed the Senate Health Policy Committee, but didn’t move any further and didn’t move in the House. We will work on it again next session.
- SB 1456/HB 1043 Doula Workforce Development (Senator Osgood/Representative Gantt)
  - Prioritizes funding for high-need regions, including rural and minority communities with limited maternity care services, administers grants, and provides technical assistance to doula training businesses and organizations.
  - This bill did not move this session, so we will continue working on it next session.

## **DEFENSIVE WORK:**

In coalition with partners at Florida Policy Institute (FPI), Catalyst Miami (CM), American Civil Liberties Union Florida (ACLU FL), 1199 Service Employees International Union (1199 SEIU), Central Florida Jobs with Justice (CF JWJ), Florida Voices for Health (FVH), and Unidos US we defeated two harmful pieces of legislation and will work diligently if these bills resurface next session:

- 1758 Public Assistance (Senator Gaetz)
  - This bill would’ve implemented Medicaid work requirements in Florida., It passed the Senate floor but was never heard in the House.
- HB 693 Health and Human Services (Representative Redondo)
  - This is the bill that was touted by the sponsor as an HR 1 implementation bill, but it went far beyond HR 1, including repealing Medicaid coverage for lawfully residing immigrant children in Florida. We successfully influenced the bill sponsor to amend that section out of the bill. The bill ultimately passed the House but was never heard in the Senate, so it died.



# FLORIDA HEALTH JUSTICE PROJECT



## **HEALTHCARE BILLS THAT PASSED:**

*(This list is not exhaustive, but highlights a few key pieces of health care legislation that passed this session.)*

- SB 1404 Memory Care
  - Requires a new memory care services license for assisted living facilities providing or advertising specialized dementia care, creates new definitions for “memory care resident” and “memory care services”, establishes requirements for obtaining a memory care services license, including staff training, physical plant, safety, and contracts specific to memory care residents, with rules to be adopted by the Agency for Health Care Administration.
- HB 0809 Temporary Certificates for Practice in Areas of Critical Need
  - Authorizes continued practice in an area even after it loses its critical-need designation if the certificateholder maintains an active primary care relationship with at least one patient there.
- HB 355 Health Care Patient Protection
  - Requires hospitals with emergency departments to develop and implement pediatric-specific policies, including weighing children in kilograms, performing accurate dose calculations, and conducting annual drills and training.
  - Mandates the designation of a pediatric emergency care coordinator to oversee compliance with pediatric care policies.
  - Authorizes and requires regular National Pediatric Readiness Assessments and optional additional assessments, with results reported to the state.
  - Add pediatrics and neonatal patient needs to the comprehensive emergency management plan requirements.
  - Directs the Florida AHCA, in consultation with the Florida Emergency Medical Services for Children State Partnership Program, to establish minimum pediatric care standards for emergency departments and publish assessment scores.
- HB 353 Sickle Cell Disease Education
  - Adds the treatment of pain for patients with sickle cell disease to the required 2-hour continuing education course on prescribing controlled substances.
- HB 915 Medical Assistance Eligibility for Working Persons with Disabilities
  - Establishes a new Medicaid eligibility program for working individuals with disabilities (Working People with Disabilities program within AHCA) to maintain benefits while earning additional income by:
    - Automatically enrolls eligible adults who are employed, have a developmental disability, and participate in specified Medicaid waiver programs.
    - Sets an income threshold up to 550% of the Supplemental Security Income Federal Benefit Rate and raises asset limits. Excludes retirement accounts from asset calculations.
    - Requires the department to provide written notices of the program upon waiver enrollment and annually thereafter.
    - Directs the agency to identify and share information on eligible recipients with the department for enrollment and outreach.