

FYI Weekly

HEALTH CARE NEWS FOR VIRGINIA'S HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS

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VHHA in Action

Each day, VHHA actively works on behalf of its members, their employees, and Virginians to advance the interests of Virginia's hospitals and health care systems. In the past week, here are some developments of interest to Virginia hospitals and health systems:

VHHA Staff Attends State Budget Proposal Unveiling by Governor Youngkin

- Ahead of the upcoming 2025 **Virginia General Assembly** session, **Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin** this week unveiled his state budget proposal regarding updates to the current two-year government funding and spending plan for the Commonwealth. Governor Youngkin also issued an [executive directive](#) this week related to maternal health initiatives. In related news, Governor Youngkin recently held an [event](#) celebrating the two-year anniversary of his Right

Help, Right Now program to invest significant new resources in Virginia's behavioral health system.

VHHA Hosts In-Person Meeting of Payor Advisory Committee

- VHHA held an in-person meeting of the **Payor Advisory Committee** this week. The Committee is a forum for hospital payor relations and revenue cycle leaders to discuss priority issues and ongoing payor-related challenges. Contact **Craig Connors** at cconnors@vhha.com to inquire about the committee.

VHHA Staff Attends Joint Commission on Health Care Meeting

- VHHA staff this week monitored a meeting of the **Joint Commission on Health Care**, a state legislative panel. The meeting [agenda](#) topics included sickle cell treatment in Virginia and strategies to strengthen the anesthesia workforce.

VHHA Hosts CMO, Physician Leader Forum Meeting

- This week, VHHA hosted a meeting of the **Virginia Chief Medical Officers and Physician Leaders Forum**, which brings together hospital and health system physician leaders for discussion of issues relevant to care delivery. Contact Abraham Segres at asegres@vhha.com with questions about this work.

VHHA Hosts Healthcare Safety & Security Workgroup Meeting

- This week, VHHA convened a meeting of the **Healthcare Safety & Security Workgroup**. The Workgroup includes hospital safety and security leaders focused on sharing experiences, ideas, and best practices regarding current and future safety, security, violence prevention, and response activities in Virginia hospitals and health systems. Contact **Abraham Segres** at asegres@vhha.com with questions about the group.

View Recording of Webinar on Winter Weather Preparedness Activities

- This week, the **Virginia Healthcare Emergency Management Program (VHEMP)** hosted a series of winter weather preparedness activities, including a communications test through the **Virginia Healthcare Alerting & Status System (VHASS)**, and a webinar featuring a **National Weather Service (NWS)** briefing on the 2024-2025 Winter Weather Outlook. VHEMP is a partnership between VHHA and the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**. View webinar presentation slides [here](#) and a webinar recording through this [link](#).

VHHA Solutions Enters Strategic Partnership with Backpack Healthcare

- [VHHA Solutions](#) recently announced a new partnership with [Backpack Healthcare](#) to offer patient throughput, mental health-related, and workflow technology services to support hospitals and providers in serving patients during their treatment journey. Under the partnership, Backpack Healthcare will work with VHHA Solutions to offer several technology-driven solutions to hospitals and providers across the Commonwealth, including those that

support discharge processes and care transitions, comprehensive mental health support for pediatric patients and families, and artificial intelligence (AI) analytics and workflow tools to help improve health care management through absenteeism tracking and risk identification. Read more [here](#).

VHHA Shares 2024 Holiday Video Card

- The holiday season is a time to be thankful for our blessings. Here at VHHA, we are grateful for the dedicated caregivers and health care professionals who work in hospitals across Virginia to help keep people healthy. To mark the season, VHHA recently shared its 2024 holiday video card that features Association staff offering holiday greetings. In the video message, VHHA staff wishes everyone a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season and a prosperous New Year. View the 2024 video holiday card [here](#).

News Updates

Virginia House Select Committee on Advancing Rural and Small Town Health Care Unveils Report

This week, the **Virginia House Select Committee on Advancing Rural and Small Town Health Care** held a news conference to unveil its report on policy recommendations to enhance health and care delivery in the Commonwealth's rural communities. The Select Committee was impaneled earlier this year by **Virginia House of Delegates Speaker Don Scott**. Over the past year, the Select Committee has assessed the state of affairs in rural health and care delivery through site visits and research to understand the challenges and opportunities facing rural health care providers and the communities they serve. VHHA and Virginia's hospitals are deeply invested in strengthening rural care delivery and greatly appreciate to Speaker Scott, **House Health and Human Services Committee Chair Delegate Mark Sickles**, **Select Committee Chair Delegate Rodney Willett**, and everyone who has worked on this critical initiative. To support that effort, VHHA [convened a Rural Health Task Force](#) and produced the [Virginia Rural Hospital Report](#) with policy recommendations across areas including behavioral health, maternal health, telehealth, transportation, and workforce development. View the Select Committee report [here](#).

Continuing Resolution to Fund Federal Government Would Extend Some Health Care Flexibilities

Ahead of a looming deadline, there is uncertainty about whether the **U.S. Congress** will vote to continue funding the federal government through March 14. A tentative compromise on a 1,574-page [continuing resolution](#) (HR 10445), which was made public this week, appeared in jeopardy this week as some critics expressed opposition to the measure ahead of an approval deadline today (Friday, Dec. 20) to avoid a potential partial government shutdown. Among health care provisions in the continuing resolution are a delay of Medicare disproportionate share hospital cuts until 2027, an extension of telehealth flexibilities through 2026, a temporary 2.5 percent payment increase under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, an expansion of acute-hospital-at-home flexibilities through 2029, and an extension of the Medicare low-volume hospital payment adjustment through 2025. The continuing resolution does not include provisions to reform prior authorization as it relates to Medicare Advantage, site neutral cuts, or new price transparency standards.

HHS Issues Final Rules on Trusted Exchange Framework, Patient Information Sharing

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) recently published a pair of final rules. One [final rule](#) implements provisions related to the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement. The rule is intended to advance equity, innovation, and interoperability by promoting the use and exchange of electronically captured health information as specified in certain provisions of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act of 2009. The final rule will be effective 30 days after it is published in the Federal Register. The other [final rule](#) amends the information blocking regulations to revise two existing information blocking exceptions and establish an additional reasonable and necessary activity that does not constitute information blocking referred to as the Protecting Care Access Exception. It is effective Dec. 17, 2024.

ASPR Seeking Public Comment on Hospital Preparedness Program Funding Formula

The **Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response** (ASPR) is [soliciting public comment](#) pertaining to funding for the **Hospital Preparedness Program** (HPP). The request for comment is part of a process to evaluate, and potentially modify, the HPP funding formula. HPP is a cooperative agreement program that supports health care coalitions in helping to prepare the health care delivery system for emergency response during public health situations that may result in an influx of patients that exceed the day-to-day capacity of health care and emergency response systems. The program is the primary source of federal funding for health care preparedness and response. In Virginia, VHHA oversees the HPP in collaboration with the **Virginia Department of Health** (VDH). The HPP funding formula is required by statute and includes three components: a base amount determined by the **U.S. Health and Human Services** (HHS) Secretary, a required adjustment based on population, and an amount based on significant unmet need and degree of risk. Today (Friday, Dec. 20) is the deadline to comment. Submit comments to this address: HPP@hhs.gov.

CISA, FBI Share Industry Guidance on IT Network Defense Against Cyber Threats

The **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency** (CISA), the **National Security Agency** (NSA), and the **Federal Bureau of Investigation** (FBI) recently shared [guidance](#) with critical industries, including health care, regarding protecting their information technology networks to guard against cyber threats. The guidance comes after CISA, NSA, the FBI, and several international cyber security agencies revealed that malicious cyber actors affiliated with the People's Republic of China compromised networks of major global telecommunications providers as part of a cyber espionage campaign.

HHS Extends Certain COVID-19 Liability Protections to 2029

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) recently announced an [amendment](#) extending to 2029 a previously issued declaration that provides liability immunity to certain individuals and entities against any claim of loss caused by, arising out of, relating to, or resulting from the manufacture, distribution, administration, or use of medical countermeasures. Provisions of the amendment apply to medical countermeasure activities provided through a federal agreement, as well as to pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians who administer COVID-19 and flu vaccines and COVID-19 tests.

Events

Register for the 2025 Virginia Hospital Lobby Day at the General Assembly

Virginia hospital and health system team members are invited to join the **Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association** for the annual Hospital Lobby Day at the **General Assembly** in Richmond, VA, which is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2025. Hospital Lobby Day is an opportunity for hospital and health system officials to engage with state lawmakers and share their perspective on the important work of hospitals and the opportunities and challenges they face. Visit this [link](#) by Jan. 10 to register to participate in Hospital Lobby Day. VHHA will host an optional virtual Lobby Day briefing on Monday, Jan. 20 at 4 p.m. Health system government relations staff will schedule Lobby Day legislative visits and meetings for participants and guide them during the day. View this [brief video recap](#) for a glimpse of Hospital Lobby Day activities.

Registration Now Open for the 2025 Virginia Patient Safety Summit

The 14th annual **Virginia Patient Safety Summit** presented by the **VHHA Center for Healthcare Excellence** and the **VHHA Foundation** is scheduled for Feb. 27, 2025 (9:30 a.m.-3:45 p.m.) as a virtual event. The theme for the upcoming Summit is “Improvement Unleashed: Strategies for Sustainable Change.” The event will be an opportunity to highlight strategies for supporting and sustaining improvements in health care quality and safety, including the use of robust process improvement methodologies. The event is being hosted in collaboration with the **Virginia Nurses Foundation**, the **Medical Society of Virginia**, the **Virginia Pharmacists Association**, and the **Virginia Society of Health-System Pharmacists**. View event registration information [here](#).

Podcast

VHHA *Patients Come First* Podcast Features Virginia State Delegate Rodney Willett

The latest episode of VHHA’s *Patients Come First* podcast features **Delegate Rodney Willett**, Willett, who represents the Henrico County-based 58th House District in the **Virginia General Assembly**, for a conversation on his work and legislative career, his role as Chair on the Select Committee on Advancing Rural and Small Town Health Care, and much more. Listen to the episode [here](#) and hear past episodes through this [link](#). Podcast episodes are also available through these podcast apps and networks: [Apple Podcast](#), [Amazon Music](#), [Spotify](#), [Pandora](#), [Stitcher](#), [TuneIn](#), [SoundCloud](#), [Blubrry](#), [iHeart Radio](#), [Deezer](#), [Podbay](#), [Overcast](#), [Pocket Casts](#), the [Virginia Audio Collective](#), the [Public Health Podcast Network](#), the [World Podcast Network](#), and the [Family Podcast Network](#). The podcast can also be heard on the radio airwaves – episodes air each Sunday at noon on 100.5 FM, 107.7 FM, 92.7 FM, and 820 AM across Central Virginia and 1650 AM in Hampton Roads, 105.1 FM and 1050 AM in Lynchburg, and Wednesdays at 1 p.m. on 93.9 FM in Richmond. Send questions, comments, feedback, or guest suggestions to pcfpodcast@vhha.com.



Around the State

Sentara Health has named **Melinda Hancock** as the new Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (CFO), effective Jan. 1, 2025. Hancock will succeed CFO Robert Broermann, who is retiring after more than 30 years with Sentara. Hancock currently holds the title of Sentara Executive Vice President and Chief Transformation Officer. Prior to joining Sentara in 2021, she held senior financial leadership positions at VCU Health, Dixon Hughes Goodman LLP, Bon Secours, Culpeper Regional Hospital, and Ernst & Young, and Deloitte. Read more [here](#).

