

**FROM THE STATEHOUSE
ADVOCACY & MANAGEMENT GROUP
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October Advocacy Report

OMNIA Alliance

The Senate Health, Human Services & Senior Citizens and the Senate Commerce Committee held a joint hearing on October 6, 2015 at the State House to review testimony from invited guests regarding the recently announced OMNIA Health Alliance formed by Horizon Blue Cross and Blue Shield (Horizon) of NJ. The hearing lasted more than eight hours.

The new plans, developed by the State's largest private insurer, Horizon, creates two tiers of hospitals. At 34 so-called Tier 1 hospitals, patients will pay lower co-pays and deductibles. The other 38 hospitals in the insurer's network fall into Tier 2. The plans have been widely criticized by legislators, physicians and hospitals relegated to Tier 2.

Senators on both sides of the aisle were critical of Horizon's OMNIA plan. At the end of the proceedings, Senators Joe Vitale and Nia Gill, who chair the Senate Health and Commerce committees, respectively, called upon Acting Attorney General John Jay Hoffman to investigate the OMNIA Health Alliance and tiered benefit plans. It is expected that the New Jersey General Assembly will conduct a set of similar hearings after November's election. There is a possibility that the new developments with Omnia will have an impact on Out-of-Network (OON) reform.

Out-of-Network Legislation

We have participated in a number of recent meetings as part of the Access to Care Coalition, which includes the Medical Society of New Jersey, the New Jersey Hospital Association, and a host of physician specialty representatives. As we've previously reported, we've been reviewing information on the New York Out-of-Network (OON) Law with regard to transparency and disclosure.

The recent announcement of the Horizon Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Jersey OMNIA Alliance will have an unknown effect on the OON push. We have gathered information that suggests sponsors of the OON bill will continue despite a similar announcement recently made by Aetna creating a similar alliance. We expect the new tiered plan announcements may complicate hopes to fast-track the OON bill when both the Senate and Assembly begin regularly meeting following the November 3, 2015 election for the lame-duck legislative period.

November 3rd election and Lame Duck

On Tuesday, November 3rd all 80 seats of the New Jersey General Assembly are up for election. The Senate does not have an election until 2017. The Assembly is controlled by the Democrats who maintain a 48-32 majority. It is widely expected that they will remain as the majority party and Speaker Vincent Prieto, Majority Leader Louis Greenwald and Budget Committee Chairman Gary Schaer will

return for another term as the top three Assembly leaders. The week after Election Day we anticipate both houses of the Legislature will begin meeting. All committees are expected to meet at least twice and each house will have several voting sessions between mid-November and the second Tuesday of January when the new legislative session will begin. The lame duck session is a time when many bills are voted on and sent to the **G**overnor for action, otherwise those initiatives will have to start anew at the beginning of the legislative process in mid-January. It will be a very busy time of the year and we have been working throughout the Summer and Fall on legislation that we expect will be considered during the lame duck session.