



APPROVAL NOTE: All mass communications require review and approval by the Majority Office PRIOR to distribution. If you make any changes to the copy below, or include it with other unapproved material, you MUST submit it to the Majority Office first for approval. Please refer to chapter 4 of the Administrative Policy Manual for more guidelines regarding House mass communications.

TARGET AUDIENCE: Florida residents

Week in Review | September 16-20, 2019

In preparation for the 2020 legislative session, state lawmakers arrived in Florida's Capital City last week to begin tackling important issues in committee meetings. State agencies and organizations presented their priority issues, budget requests, and activities and achievements over the past year. Representatives sat in on meetings that covered a variety of priority topics including health and human services, education, commerce, business and professions, and veterans affairs, among others.

Also last week, the House Republican Conference designated Rep. Chris Sprowls of Pinellas County its next Speaker of the Florida House for the 2020-2022 legislative term. The next committee week is scheduled for October 14 through 18. The 2020 legislative session will begin Tuesday, January 14.



House Committee Reviews Certificate of Need Repeal Implementation

The Health Market Reform Subcommittee learned this week that implementation of the certificate of need repeal (HB 21) that passed in April is now well underway across the state. HB 21 eliminated the unnecessary regulation (certificate of need review requirements) for hospitals and hospital services while ensuring that the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) retained rulemaking authority to maintain health care quality.

At the committee meeting, representatives from AHCA said the agency is developing licensure standards for specialty hospital services (such as NICUs and substance abuse services), and expects the formal rulemaking process to begin in October. Since HB 21 passed, AHCA has not received any new licensure applications from hospitals.

Removing government barriers to new hospitals and services and eliminating incentives for expensive litigation will increase health care competition and drive down prices for Floridians.



➤ **House Health Quality Subcommittee Reviews Telehealth Implementation**

Since HB 23 passed in April, medical boards have eliminated rules that once limited telehealth for in-state providers, and the Department of Health will open the telehealth application for out-of-state providers in less than two weeks, on October 1.

With these actions, Florida's 21 million residents – especially those in rural areas – will be able to benefit from access to health care services via internet, phone, video, and other means of digital communication. The Florida House remains committed to increasing access to affordable and quality health care for all Floridians.

➤ **House Subcommittees Assess Impact of Child Welfare Funding Changes**

Faced with the looming loss of \$90 million in federal Title IV-E waiver funding for critical child welfare services, the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) reviewed its progress toward filling the gap with the House Children, Families, & Seniors and Health Care Appropriations Subcommittees.

Fortunately, new laws recently passed by the Legislature will make DCF eligible for other types of federal funding right away. As a result, family and close friends who step in to care for abused and neglected children will receive more assistance. The House will continue to support the caregivers and community organizations that work tirelessly to care for these vulnerable children.

➤ **House Education Committee Hears Overview from the Office of Early Learning**

Last year, thousands of Florida's children benefitted from the state's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program – a total of 169,986 children enrolled, or 75 percent of the state's 4 year olds. The Office of Early Learning provided this and other important updates about its work to prepare Florida's 1.3 million children for kindergarten to the House Education Committee last week.

The Office of Early Learning also noted that a majority of the state's low-income families took part last year in Florida's School Readiness program, which exists to help empower parents to become active participants in their child's education and financially self-sufficient. Both the voluntary Pre-K and School Readiness programs help put children on a path toward educational and lifelong success, which translates to a bright future for Florida.



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE DANE EAGLE, MAJORITY LEADER



Report: Homes Built to Modern Building Code Held up Better in Hurricane

In 2018, Hurricane Michael slammed into Florida as a Category 5 storm, causing significant loss to the Florida Panhandle with maximum sustained winds of 161 miles per hour and the storm surge reaching 14 feet in some areas. A damage-assessment report presented to the Business & Professions Subcommittee by the University of Florida (UF), under a contract with the Florida Building Commission, has found that homes built after the implementation of a statewide building code in 2002 saw significantly less structural damage than homes built prior.

While some newer homes still saw damage to their roofs and wall cladding, a majority of homeowners who responded to UF's survey said they generally thought their homes held up well. Most added that they would consider making improvements to protect their homes against future hurricanes.

While disasters like Michael are unavoidable, the Florida Building Code has drastically improved outcomes for those who built in accordance with the Code, and with studies such as this one, we can continue to find solutions to help Florida homeowners protect against natural disasters.