



SC Legislative News

February 5 – February 9, 2024

This update is prepared and distributed by the South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) to keep you informed of state legislative updates that may affect the Agency, mental health, healthcare, budget information, and other issues of interest. This publication is also available to employees on the SCDMH intranet site. Contact Robin Crawford, SCDMH Director of Governmental Affairs, for more information at robin.crawford@scdmh.org.

On Tuesday, February 6, the House Judiciary Constitutional Laws Subcommittee met to consider [H.4927](#), the House version of the legislation that would restructure the state’s healthcare agencies. H.4927 creates an Executive Office of Health and Policy, a position of Secretary of Health and Policy, and moves multiple existing departments under the new Executive Office and Secretary. The subcommittee received testimony from Boston Consulting Group, which was hired by the Department of Administration to study the state’s current healthcare agency structures and service delivery models. It also received testimony from the Department of Administration, which was asked to work with the subcommittee to draft an amendment making changes to the enabling statutes for the agencies involved in the legislation. The amendment also:

- addresses agency name changes and the appointment of directors of the departments currently reflected in the bill;
- turns the current SCDMH and SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN) commissions into advisory boards;
- integrates SCDMH and the SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS) into a single department under the newly appointed Secretary;
- requires a review of regulations by the Secretary before submission to the General Assembly;
- requires data and information sharing with the Secretary and other departments of the new Office;
- cleans up some errors in the legislation regarding department name changes; and
- adds consistent language to reflect the appointments of department directors.

The changes are in line with those the Senate made to its version of the bill, [S.915](#). The subcommittee members voted to adopt the amendment and gave the bill a favorable report as amended. The next step for the legislation is for the full Judiciary Committee to consider the bill; a meeting has not been set to do so at this time.

On Tuesday, a House Medical, Military, Public and Municipal Affairs (“3M”) Subcommittee met to consider [H.4365](#), the Social Workers Compact Act, which outlines the requirements for a state to participate in the Social Work Licensure Compact, requirements for social workers to participate, and steps to maintain membership. The goal of this legislation is to promote mobility and address workforce shortages, increase public access to social work services, and allow for the use of telehealth for social work services. Once seven states pass the compact legislation, it will be enacted. Currently, two states have enacted the legislation, and more than 20 others are considering the legislation. The subcommittee gave the bill a favorable report and it will move forward to be considered by the full 3M Committee.

Other debates that kept the House and Senate busy this week include alcohol delivery, medical marijuana, and the constitutional right to carry a firearm.

Every state-level House and Senate seat is up for reelection this year, and so are all seven of the state's Congressional seats. Many legislators are beginning to announce their candidacies to run for their current seats or new ones. Others around the state are beginning to announce their candidacies to run for open seats or announcing the intent to challenge incumbents. The filing deadline to run for office is April 1, 2024, primary elections for all candidates will be held on June 11, 2024, and primary runoffs will be held on June 25, 2024. The general election for all candidates will be held November 5, 2024.

Save the Date! Wednesday, March 6th, will be Mental Health Advocacy Day at the SC State House from 9am to 12pm. Remarks will begin at 10am on the south side State House steps. Join us as we connect with legislators and community champions to advocate for mental health and suicide prevention!

Visit the SC State House [website](#) to read any legislation of interest, [find out who represents you in the SC House and SC Senate](#), or to contact your legislators.