



SC Legislative News

April 8 – April 19, 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.

Last week, the Senate met in perfunctory session to focus on the budget while House members worked towards the [crossover deadline](#). Even if a bill did not crossover in time, it can still be taken up if 2/3 of both bodies agree to do so. Germane amendments can still be added to bills if they are allowed to crossover.

Last week, the Senate Finance Committee finalized its version of the state's FY24-25 [budget](#), which includes the following recommendations for SCDMH: \$5 million for the Capital Reserve Fund for Stone Veterans Nursing Home; a little over \$2 million for moving Central Administration from Bull St. to the former Dominion Energy campus on Otarre Parkway in Cayce; \$6.8 million for forensic bed capacity expansion; \$4 million for contracted community inpatient beds; \$6.3 million for the SMI Youth Treatment Program at Hall; and \$2.5 million for the state's Alternative Transportation program. The Senate also recommended a \$1,300 base pay increase for state employees earning \$50,000 or less annually and a \$2.75% increase for those earning more. They did not recommend a premium increase for the state health plan.

This week, the House Judiciary Constitutional Laws Subcommittee met to consider [S.915](#), the bill that would restructure the healthcare agencies, create a new Executive Office of Health and Policy, and create a position of Secretary of Health and Policy. The subcommittee amended it by striking all of the Senate's bill language, adding in the language from the House version of the bill, [H.4927](#), and changed a requirement that would allow only the Governor to call upon the state's sheriffs and constables to assist the Secretary of Health in a state of emergency. It was given a favorable report and will be considered by the full House Judiciary Committee.

This week, the House Labor, Commerce, and Industry (LCI) Administration and Regulations Subcommittee considered [S.408](#), a bill that would require one hour of suicide prevention training as a portion of the total continuing education requirements for licensure for counselors and social workers. The bill was amended to change the date that the requirement would go into effect, to fall in line with current license renewal cycles. It was given a favorable report and will be considered by the full LCI Committee. The subcommittee also considered [S.610](#), the Professional Counseling Compact, that would allow South Carolina counseling licenses to reciprocate with other states that pass the legislation, but it was carried over while subcommittee members seek answers regarding control of license privileges.

The budget will be debated by the full Senate on the floor next week. Once the Senate passes the budget, it will go back to the House, which will either concur with the changes or reject them, requiring the differences to be worked out in a conference committee made up of three Senators and three Representatives appointed by the leadership in each chamber.

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.