

**WMHCA**

**Subject: Update from  
Ann Jablonski**

**Conference Call on AB 463**

# Wisconsin Mental Health Counselors Association

Summer / Fall 2007

As you know, I participated this morning in a conference call with Marc Herstand and about five of his members. First, I would say from the conversation that they are very well organized on a constituent contact basis. We will have to duplicate that in the coming months, which means we have to discuss this soon.

Marc mentioned that AB 463 was supposed to go to the Insurance Committee--what bill author Rep. Bies had told them--and it ended up in the Committee on Health and Health Care Reform. There could be interesting background here but it may simply be a question of turf, since this is a health care reform, I guess.

One of their members had talked with the Speaker, Mike Heusch, from the La Crosse area. He said he would not jump on board until he knows all sides but at first blush he didn't have any problems with the bill. He told her to ask Chairwoman Vukmir for a public hearing and he would let Vukmir know that he had talked with Jennifer. From doing away with dual regulation perspective, Heusch thought the bill made sense.

She views the La Crosse-based Gunderson Lutheran Health plan and complex as a potential problem, however. I can tell you that Heusch will definitely listen to them. Anyway, Gunderson's position is as yet unknown but they are a member of the Wisconsin Assn of Health Plans. One of the group had called the WAHP but had been given short shrift by whomever answered the phone, as in, we're not interested in this bill. I offered to call them because I've known their ED for a long time and I was going to call her anyway to get a handle on the opposition.

Marc has a meeting scheduled with National Federation of Independent Business next week. They have not had much response from consumer groups yet and will have to call them again.

Marc also met with the DHFS lobbyist, who voiced some concerns re: financial impact on Medicaid budget, physician referral (is it legal to do away with it under federal law?), undermining quality of care. DHFS lobbyist will set up a meeting with some departments so Marc can answer questions and try to allay concerns. Among the contacts mentioned were Easterday and Joyce Allen, so it's only a matter of time before someone blurts about HFS 35.

DHFS said that they'd probably be testifying for information only at a public hearing. This may sound benign but a department and any group can be really devastating with their "information only." Hard to read what the message really was since I'm a third party.

Marc contacted the Insurance Commissioner, and he and his staff will not oppose the bill.

Marc also said he made a presentation to the MFT,PC, SW Examining Board on 7/31. He said everyone was very supportive and they voted unanimously to support the bill. A person named Albrecht, a MFT, has been designated as the board's testifier at the public hearing, if there is one. The atty for the board wanted an addition to the bill regarding limiting practitioners to scope of practice in the AODA area. The board also wanted to add trainees as payees but Marc noted that would generate a fiscal impact. Those on the call did not approve that request.

If this bill isn't more or less revenue neutral, it will run into problems. DHFS, and perhaps OCI, will have to do a fiscal estimate on the bill which must be presented to the standing committee before it takes executive action but usually surfaces (at the chair's request) before the public hearing. The FE can be a way to sandbag legislation. Anyway, Marc will also ask Senator Miller to contact the Legislative Fiscal Bureau analyst, Maria Moore, to do a memo as well. This is not an official part of procedure unless the bill is referred to the Joint Committee on Finance after the standing committee acts on the legislation. But it could help sell the bill since Maria is a "total supporter" on this issue, so they say.

**Marc wanted to know if I and/or a member would accompany him when he met with Chairwoman Vukmir and probably other committee members.** I would suggest we do that, and that one or two of you accompany me. We can get to know the chair, which we need to do, and we can scope out what lies ahead on this bill. You need to give me the go-ahead on this because I think Marc wants to set this up fairly soon.

The next conference call will be scheduled for September 7. I will not be able to participate because I will be out of town.

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