

MINUTES OF THE HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION

Meeting of July 14, 2021

MASSACHUSETTS HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION

Date of Meeting: July 14, 2021

Start Time: 12:00 PM

End Time: 1:29 PM

	Present?	ITEM 1: Approval of Minutes	ITEM 2: FY22 Budget	ITEM 3: Executive Session
Stuart Altman*	X	X	X	X
Don Berwick	X	X	X	2nd
Barbara Blakeney	X	M	X	X
Martin Cohen	X	X	M	M
David Cutler	X	2nd	2nd	X
Timothy Foley	X	X	X	X
Patty Houpt	X	X	X	X
Chris Kryder	A	A	A	A
Ron Mastrogiovanni	X	X	X	X
Sec. Marylou Sudders	X	X	X	X
Sec. Michael Heffernan	X	abs.	X	X
Summary	10 Members Attended	Approved with 9 votes in the affirmative	Approved with 10 votes in the affirmative	Approved with 10 votes in the affirmative

Presented below is a summary of the meeting, including time-keeping, attendance, and votes.

*Chairman

(M): Made motion; (2nd): Seconded motion; (ab): Abstained from Vote; (A): Absent from Meeting

Proceedings

A virtual meeting of the Health Policy Commission (HPC) was held on July 14, 2021, at 12:00 PM. A recording of the meeting is available [here](#). Meeting materials are available on the Board meetings page [here](#).

Participating commissioners included: Dr. Stuart Altman (Chair), Mr. Martin Cohen (Vice Chair); Dr. Donald Berwick; Ms. Barbara Blakeney; Dr. David Cutler; Mr. Timothy Foley; Ms. Patricia Houpt; Mr. Ron Mastrogiovanni; Secretary Marylou Sudders, Executive Office of Health and Human Services; and Mr. Brendan Moss, designee for Secretary Michael Heffernan, Executive Office of Administration and Finance.

Dr. Altman began the meeting at 12:00 PM and welcomed the commissioners, staff, and members of the public viewing the meeting live on the HPC's YouTube channel.

ITEM 1: Approval of Minutes

Dr. Altman called for a vote to approve the minutes from the June 24, 2021, Board meeting. Ms. Blakeney made the motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Cutler seconded it. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion was approved with 9 votes in the affirmative and one abstention.

ITEM 2: Executive Director's Report

Dr. Altman turned the presentation over to Mr. David Seltz, Executive Director, who outlined the day's agenda.

ITEM 2a: New and Upcoming Publications

Mr. Seltz turned the presentation over to Ms. Coleen Elstermeyer, Deputy Executive Director, who provided an overview of the HPC's newly published and upcoming publications. For more information, see slide 7. The publications portion of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

ITEM 2b: HPC Health Equity Framework

Ms. Elstermeyer provided an update on the HPC's health equity framework. For more information, see slides 9-16. The health equity framework portion of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

Item 3: Market Oversight and Transparency

ITEM 3a: Market Changes

Mr. Seltz turned the presentation over to Ms. Katherine Scarborough Mills, Senior Director, Market Oversight and Transparency, who provided an update on recent market changes. For more information, see slides 19-24. The market changes portion of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

Ms. Blakeney said that she worried about nonprofit organizations being acquired by for-profits.

Ms. Mills said that this would be a consideration in the review process for the listed transactions.

Dr. Berwick asked what the role of commissioners would be in the drafting the comment for the independent cost analysis (ICA). Ms. Mills said that the timeline was relatively short, but that staff would provide a good deal of information and opportunities for commissioner feedback before the comment was issued. Dr. Berwick asked whether the Board would vote on issuing the comment. Ms. Lois Johnson, General Counsel, said yes. Dr. Berwick asked for clarification on the timeline which Ms. Mills also provided. Sec. Sudders noted that the HPC weighs in prior to the vote by the public health council. Ms. Johnson confirmed that this was correct. Dr. Cutler and Dr. Altman noted that an additional Board meeting may need to be scheduled in order to meet the requirements of the timeline.

ITEM 3b: DataPoints: Dental Emergency Department Use

Mr. Seltz turned the presentation over to Ms. Diana Sanchez, Research Associate, Research and Cost Trends, who presented on the latest DataPoints edition on dental emergency department (ED) usage in Massachusetts. For more information, see slides 26-31. The DataPoints entry can be viewed [here](#). The presentation can be viewed [here](#).

Dr. Berwick asked whether there was a way the HPC could reemphasize its support for allowing mid-level dental therapists to practice in order to expand oral health care access in Massachusetts. He suggested that some portion of the cost trends hearing (CTH) could be devoted to further discussion of this topic. Mr. Seltz noted that the DataPoints entry does reiterate the HPC's support for this policy and that the Baker-Polito administration filed legislation on it. Sec. Sudders added that the administration had restored the oral health benefits in the Medicaid program.

Ms. Houpt said that it would be interesting to see the data on dental ED use be quantified in terms of dollar amounts and potential future care avoidance. Mr. Seltz agreed and noted that the brief includes some data on national cost estimates that staff could think about modeling for Massachusetts specifically. Ms. Houpt noted that even people with dental benefits often do not take advantage of their benefits for routine care.

Dr. Altman agreed with the comments made by other commissioners and said that it would be important to include oral health in the CTH discussions.

Mr. Mastrogiovanni suggested examining states that had already implemented some of the recommended policies in order to get a better picture of their impact.

ITEM 3c: 2021 Cost Trends Report: Policy Recommendations

Mr. Seltz turned the presentation over to Dr. David Auerbach, Director, Research and Cost Trends, who previewed some of the key findings from the 2021 Cost Trends Report (CTR). For more information, see slides 33-46. The CTR presentation can be viewed [here](#).

Dr. Auerbach turned the presentation back over to Mr. Seltz who presented on the first five potential policy recommendations for the 2021 CTR. For more information, see slides 47-53.

Dr. Altman, Dr. Cutler, and Dr. Berwick said that they supported the areas of focus and said that the data indicates that the current regime is not adequately disincentivizing market participants from raising costs. Dr. Berwick expressed interest in getting increased input from commissioners on the recommendations outside of a public meeting setting. He recommended that the agency focus on higher-cost providers rather than higher-cost-increase providers and suggested that it might make sense to separate affordability and equity targets as those issues, while related, also exist independently. Mr. Seltz said that commissioners would be engaged in the recommendation drafting process outside public meetings in the coming months. He said that he was in agreement on the separation of the equity and affordability issues.

Mr. Foley said that he appreciated seeing some bold, new recommendations listed. He reiterated Dr. Berwick's point about not treating all cost growth the same and said that it was important for the HPC to keep in mind that high health care costs are disproportionately borne by low-wage workers in the Commonwealth.

Sec. Sudders reiterated the importance of conducting individual conversations with commissioners and consolidating individual comments into coherent recommendations the Board could vote on. She noted that the governor's health care bill included language strengthening accountability for spending growth in excess of the Health Care Cost Growth Benchmark. Regarding bullet "b" on slide 51, she noted that the issue of facility fees complicated the question of payment parity between telehealth and in-person visits. She said that this was a nuance that would need to be considered in the recommendation. Mr. Seltz said that the slide bullet was a streamlined version of what could be a larger recommendation including that nuance.

Mr. Seltz presented on the last five potential policy recommendations for the 2021 CTR. For more information, see slides 54-57.

Dr. Berwick asked if it would be possible to include a summary of the previous year's CTR recommendations and whether and how they were acted upon. Mr. Seltz said that there was likely a way to incorporate that and noted that some recommendations from last year's report had been included in the health care legislation passed at the beginning of the year.

Item 4: HPC FY 2022 Budget

Mr. Seltz gave an overview of the FY 2022 budget proposal for the HPC. For more information, see slide 59. The budget portion of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

Dr. Altman called for a vote to approve the continuing resolution on the HPC's budget. Mr. Blakeney made the motion to approve the resolution. Dr. Cutler seconded it. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion was approved unanimously.

Item 5: Executive Session

Dr. Altman called for a vote to move into executive session. Mr. Cohen made the motion to move into executive session. Dr. Berwick seconded it. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Altman - Aye

Mr. Cohen - Aye

Dr. Berwick - Aye

Ms. Blakeney - Aye

Dr. Cutler - Aye

Mr. Foley - Aye

Ms. Houpt - Aye

Mr. Mastrogiovanni - Aye

Sec. Sudders - Aye

Mr. Moss – Aye

The public session of the meeting adjourned at 1:29 PM.