

**MINUTES OF THE HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION**

**Meeting of May 19, 2021**

**MASSACHUSETTS HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION**

---

**Date of Meeting:** May 19, 2021

**Start Time:** 1:00 PM

**End Time:** 3:05 PM

---

	<b>Present?</b>	<b>ITEM 1: Approval of Minutes</b>	<b>ITEM 2: NAS Investment Program</b>	<b>ITEM 3: Nurse Licensure Compact</b>	<b>ITEM 4: Executive Session</b>
Stuart Altman*	X	X	2nd	X	X
Don Berwick	X	2nd	M	2nd	X
Barbara Blakenev	2nd	X	X	M	X
Martin Cohen	M	M	X	X	M
David Cutler	X	X	X	X	X
Timothy Foley	X	X	X	N	X
Patty Houpt	A	A	A	A	A
Chris Kryder	X	A	X	X	2nd
Ron Mastrogiovanni	X	X	X	X	X
Sec. Marylou Sudders	X	X	X	X	X
Sec. Michael Heffernan	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Summary</b>	<b>10 Members Attended</b>	<b>Approved with 9 votes in the affirmative</b>	<b>Approved with 10 votes in the affirmative</b>	<b>Approved with 9 votes in the affirmative</b>	<b>Approved with 10 votes in the affirmative</b>

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 May 19, 2021, at 1:00 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; Dr. John Christian “Chris” Kryder; Mr. Ron Mastrogiovanni; Secretary Marylou Sudders, Executive Office of Health and Human Services; and Ms. Cassandra Roeder, 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 April 14, 2021, Board meeting. Mr. Cohen made the motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Blakeney seconded it. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion was approved unanimously.

### ITEM 2: Executive Director’s Report

Dr. Altman turned the presentation over to Mr. David Seltz, Executive Director, and Ms. Coleen Elstermeyer, Deputy Executive Director, who presented on recent and upcoming publications, and the HPC’s health equity work. For more information, see slides 6-8. The Executive Director’s Report portion of the meeting can be viewed [here](#).

### ITEM 3: Care Delivery Transformation

Dr. Altman turned the presentation over Ms. Blakeney. Ms. Blakeney provided an introduction for the care delivery transformation (CDT) portion of the meeting.

### ITEM 3a: Mother and Infant-Focused Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Investment Program

Ms. Blakeney turned the presentation over to Ms. Kelly Hall, Director, Health Care Transformation and Innovation, HCTI, who introduced a video on the Mother and Infant-Focused Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Investment Program. The video can be seen [here](#).

Ms. Hall introduced Ms. Rachel Applewhite, Program Associate, HCTI, who presented on the investment program. For more information, see slides 11-17. The Mother and Infant-Focused NAS Investment Program presentation can be viewed [here](#).

### **ITEM 3b: Investment Program Launch: Birth Equity and Support through the Inclusion of Doula Expertise (BESIDE)**

Ms. Hall introduced Ms. Jasmine Bland, Manager, HCTI, who presented on the proposal for the Birth Equity and Support through the Inclusion of Doula Expertise (BESIDE) program. For more information, see slides 19-25. The BESIDE program presentation can be seen [here](#).

Dr. Altman said that it would be interesting to see what was being done in this space across the country and asked whether there was growing literature on the topic. Ms. Bland said that there were a few states that had done Medicaid doula programs and that there was extensive literature demonstrating strong evidence that doula care improves maternal and infant-health outcomes.

Dr. Berwick asked what portion of each \$250,000 award would be used to set up a program at a specific site. Ms. Bland said that the hope was that the bulk of the funding would be used to provide services to birthing people.

Sec. Sudders noted that the award amount was significant and suggested that the HPC consider awarding more than two programs. Ms. Hall described the considerations for the award amounts. Dr. Altman said that the Board would vote on the proposal and that staff should examine whether it might be prudent to reduce the award amount in order to increase the number of awardees.

Dr. Altman called for a vote to authorize the HPC to issue a request for proposals (RFP) for the BESIDE program. Dr. Berwick made the motion to approve the investment program. Dr. Altman seconded it. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **ITEM 4: Market Oversight and Transparency**

Mr. Seltz introduced Dr. David Auerbach, Research and Cost Trends (RCT).

#### **ITEM 4a: 2020 Cost Trends Report: Income and Affordability Findings**

Dr. Auerbach and Ms. Diana Sanchez, Research Associate, RCT, presented on the income and affordability findings from the 2020 Cost Trends Report (CTR). For more information, see slides 28-44. The CTR presentation can be seen [here](#).

Dr. Altman asked to what degree the spending trends among income groups outlined in the presentation were due to prices versus utilization. Dr. Auerbach said that the difference was mostly due to utilization trends.

Dr. Altman said it would be interesting to see what this data looked like for the Medicaid and uninsured populations in Massachusetts.

Dr. Cutler asked if there was something the HPC could do to try and push for a more equitable premium structure across income groups. Dr. Auerbach said that employers could change their premium contribution structures so that lower-wage employees pay less than higher-wage

employees or design value-based insurance benefits that reduce hospital and ED use by incentivizing preventative care.

Mr. Cohen and Mr. Foley noted that an additional driver of the utilization difference could be the inability for some lower-income individuals to take time away from work for preventative care. Mr. Foley agreed with Dr. Altman that it would be useful to compare the data for the commercial population with the Medicaid population where feasible.

## **ITEM 4b: Evaluation of the Commonwealth's Entry into the Nurse Licensure Compact**

Mr. Seltz introduced Ms. Lois Johnson, General Counsel, and Ms. Katherine McCann, Assistant General Counsel, who presented on the HPC's evaluation on the Commonwealth's entry into the Nurse Licensure Compact. For more information, see slides 46-57. The Nurse Licensure Compact presentation can be seen [here](#).

Dr. Altman, Ms. Blakeney, Dr. Berwick, Dr. Cutler, and Sec. Sudders, said that they were in favor of the Commonwealth's entrance into the Nurse Licensure Compact.

Dr. Cutler asked about a cap on travel nurse pay but Ms. Johnson said staff did not research the issue.

Dr. Berwick asked whether the compact precluded licensure for nurses who did not pass their criminal background checks. Ms. Johnson said that the board would have discretion except in cases of felony conviction or misdemeanor's related to nursing.

Mr. Foley noted that he was the lone dissenting voice on the Board. He said that he was concerned that entering the compact was not a long-term solution to the state's nurse staffing problem. He asked about the comparator states used in the job posting analysis and Dr. Auerbach explained the methodology used.

Dr. Altman called for a vote to approve the issuance of the report on Massachusetts' entry in the Nurse Licensure Compact. Ms. Blakeney made the motion. Dr. Berwick seconded it. The vote was taken by roll call. The motion was approved with 9 votes in the affirmative and one against.

## **ITEM 4c: Notices of Material Change**

Ms. Elstermeyer turned the presentation over to Ms. Katherine Mills, Senior Director, Market Oversight and Transparency (MOAT), who presented on material change notices (MCNs) received since the last Board meeting. For more information, see slides 59-61. The MCN presentation can be seen [here](#).

## **ITEM 4d: 2021 Performance Improvement Plan Process**

Ms. Mills Presented on the performance improvement plan (PIP) process for 2021. For more information, see slides 63-69. The PIPs process presentation can be seen [here](#).

Dr. Altman and Dr. Berwick noted concerns about how organizations used health status adjustment (HSA) fundamentally to change the data in ways that made spending above the benchmark acceptable. Dr. Berwick asked if it would be possible to see from the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) what entities would be referred were total medical expenditure (TME) not health-adjusted. While noting that the statute requires the PIPs list to be based only on HSA TME, Ms. Mills said the unadjusted data was available for examination.

## **ITEM 5: Executive Session Vote**

Dr. Altman called for a vote to move into a closed executive session to discuss the list of entities found to exceed the health care cost growth benchmark from the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA). Mr. Cohen made the motion. Dr. Kryder seconded it. The vote was taken by roll call:

Dr. Altman – Aye  
Mr. Cohen – Aye  
Dr. Berwick – Aye  
Ms. Blakeney – Aye  
Dr. Cutler – Aye  
Mr. Foley – Aye  
Dr. Kryder – Aye  
Mr. Mastrogiovanni – Aye  
Ms. Roeder – Aye  
Sec. Sudders – Aye

The open session portion of the meeting ended at 3:05 PM.