

## **BHAM Montana Legislative Update – January 24, 2025**

The Legislators work for the people of Montana. It's imperative that you stand up and make your voice heard!

There are many advocacy opportunities around behavioral health in this legislative session: several bills addressing Medicaid Expansion continuation, a number of Children's and Families Services Division bills, and several addressing reimbursement rates. To participate in any of the committee hearings, click this link and sign up:

<https://www.legmt.gov/participate/>

Bills we're watching:

There are two bills BHAM is supporting that will remove the sunset for Medicaid Expansion:

1. [HB245](#) from Senator Buttrey was heard on Wednesday January 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Capitol. Dozens of proponents spoke in favor of the bill, and no one opposed it. **BHAM strongly supports this bill and encourages advocacy efforts to move it forward.**
2. [HB230](#) from Representative Caferro was also heard at the Health and Human Services Committee on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. This bill would also remove the sunset, as well as job requirements, and make Medicaid continuous for 12 months. **BHAM strongly supports this bill and encourages advocacy efforts to move it forward.**
3. [SB62](#) from Senator Glimm proposes the phase out of Medicaid Expansion over with no new members being approved. This bill was heard on January 22<sup>nd</sup> in the Senate Public Health, Welfare, and Safety Committee. Numerous opponents spoke against this bill and no proponents spoke in favor. **BHAM strongly opposes this bill and encourages advocacy efforts to oppose it.**
4. [SB199](#), from Senators Trebas and Emmrich, proposes complicated additional requirements and taxes for Medicaid Expansion. Senator Buttrey spoke eloquently when introducing his HB245 about how unnecessary these types of bills were for the program. This bill will be heard Monday in the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee. **BHAM strongly opposes this bill and encourages advocacy efforts to oppose it.**

This is a link to an article regarding the Medicaid Expansion bills:

<https://montanafreepress.org/2025/01/22/dozens-turn-out-to-support-montana-medicaid-expansion-in-first-bill-hearings/>

There are also two draft bills we're working on for rate reimbursements to Medicaid providers. The 2023 Legislative Session approved \$339M to bring Medicaid rates up to the Guidehouse rate study guidelines. Unfortunately, those guidelines were based on 2020 costs for Medicaid providers. In the last five years since the 2020 costs were studied, inflation and personnel costs have climbed dramatically and providers are once again well below the cost of delivering the care. Urgent action is needed this session.

1. [LC4190](#) was sponsored by Senator Esp. This bill would require cost-reporting by Medicaid agencies in senior and long-term care, adult and children's mental health, intellectual and development disabilities, and substance use disorder to provide a cost report every two years. Rates could then be set to cover those costs at every legislative session. Unfortunately, due to a confusion among legislators and bill draft regulations, this bill was pulled for introduction and then had to be resubmitted for drafting. **BHAM is working to find a new sponsor for this bill. BHAM strongly supports this bill and encourages advocacy efforts to move it forward.**
2. LC2035 (not yet drafted) from Representative Caferro, would allow for an inflationary factor to be introduced into statute for all Medicaid providers, similar to the inflationary factor already in statute for physicians who accept Medicaid. **BHAM strongly supports this bill and encourages advocacy efforts to move it forward.**

Here is a licensure bill that we're following:

1. [SB140](#) carried by Senator Kerr-Carpenter would adopt the social work licensure compact. This would allow for social workers from other states to become licensed in Montana, similar to the nursing compact already adopted. This bill will be heard on January 29<sup>th</sup> in the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee. The debate around this bill has been muddied by legislators opposing Childrens and Families Services Division and the social workers who work there. It makes no sense to oppose an entire profession because you don't like someone in that profession. Because many ministers have been convicted of sexual abuse of children, do we oppose all ministers? Because car salesmen or lawyers or dentists have been convicted of fraud, do we dismiss everyone in those professions? Just as nurse practitioners and physician assistants, act as physician extenders in communities, social workers can help fill the gap where behavioral health professionals are two rare in our rural communities. **BHAM**

**strongly supports this bill and encourages advocacy efforts to move it forward.**