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Blastfax!

Legislative Update: FY '18 Budget Passes Out of Conference, Includes Funds for Medicare Parity & Fix for Attestation Policy; PA/NP Hydrocodone Prescribing Bill in Senate

Yesterday, **the Budget Conference Committee finalized the FY 2018 budget**. It included two key items for pediatricians. 1. The budget adds \$17M to the Medicaid budget to increase to 2014 Medicare rates 76 additional CPT codes. This was a key Georgia AAP goal and now means that the entire CPT E/M code set that was increased in 2013 and 2014 with federal ACA funds, will now be increased starting July 1, 2017 in the Georgia Medicaid program.

Secondly, the budget also allocates funds and directs DCH to open a new period of Attestation for new rates effective July 1, 2017. This is intended to correct the current Medicaid policy that limits the increases to only those who attested in 2013 and 2014; and also making providers ineligible if they moved offices or opened an additional office after January 1, 2015. **This action is intended to end the two-tiered system which had some physicians receiving the old Medicaid rates and some receiving the enhanced rates.** As example, the enhanced Medicaid payment for a 99213 was 40% higher than the regular Medicaid fee schedule. Thanks to all of you who contacted your state Representatives and Senators about this issue! A great win for us and our other primary care colleagues.

SB 125, would allow PA's and NP's to prescribe any "hydrocodone compound product" to children under the age of 18. The prescription would be limited to a 5-day supply containing not more than the lesser of 100 milligrams or 30 pills. The bill passed the House and is now in the Senate. We opposed this bill as very unwise policy given the issues with opioid addiction, NAS, and congenital syphilis in our state. Please consider contacting your Senate and urge them to vote No on SB 125 until provisions concerning children are removed. If you don't know your state senator is visit our website at www.gaaap.org and go to Legislative page and enter your home or practice address.

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