



# Legislative Update

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## Protecting Health Care Privacy

On Monday, April 3, Governor Baker signed the Patient Confidentiality Protection for Health Insurance (PATCH) Law. BPHC is a member of a coalition known as the PATCH Alliance, and together the coalition has been working towards the passage of this law for a few years.

The law closes an important insurance loophole in patient confidentiality. Before the PATCH law, insurance companies would send a statement (“explanation of benefits”) to the insurance policy holder for any medical visit or test conducted regardless of if the holder was the patient or not. Now, the patient can request to receive those insurance statements directly for any medical treatments. Also, 18 services have been identified as sensitive (mental health,

sexual health, injuries care, and substance use care), and will not be detailed in insurance statements. This will create more privacy for spouses, adult children, and in some circumstances the underage children of insurance policy holders seeking medical services.

The PATCH Alliance is now in the process of creating communications to inform the public of this change. BPHC’s Health

Equity Advisory Committee has provided invaluable assistance by reviewing the first pamphlet. Their insights have ensured the materials are reviewed through a health equity lens.



*Governor Baker signs PATCH into law*

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## Obamacare Enrollment Numbers

New reports have shown that 11.8 million individuals enrolled in Obamacare in 2018 compared to the 12.2 million in 2017. The current administration cut the enrollment budget by

90 percent, cut funding to programs dedicated to enrollment assistance, and shortened the enrollment period. The decrease is smaller than expected, and advocates will continue to work on

creative ways to get information out. The Mayor’s Health Line has done a great job of reaching out to Boston residents and helped 462 individuals with the application process!

## Criminal Justice Reform Bill

Governor Baker has signed the recently passed [Criminal Justice Reform Bill](#).

The following includes an overview of what was in the bill:

- Decriminalizes minor offenses including being in the presence of heroin, and disruptive behavior in school.
- Diverts juveniles and adults away from trial and jail for minor offenses.
- Gives a wider range of professionals the ability to deem a person drug dependent, thus opening the option for jail diversion.
- Reforms bail to reduce unnecessary incarceration.
- Repeals and limits mandatory minimums for non-opiate and drug paraphernalia sales, sales within school zones, while strengthening minimum mandatories for opioid trafficking.
- Strengthens protections for public safety, including strengthening penalties for intimidation of witnesses.
- Reduces solitary confinement.
- Improves prison conditions including assuring transgender prisoners are housed with prisoners of the same gender identity and requiring all prisoners without high school diplomas have access to education programming.
- Release prisoners who are permanently incapacitated and pose no safety risk.
- Reduces fees imposed on defendants and makes criminal records more private.
- Raises minimum age for juvenile courts' jurisdiction to 12, minimizing harsh detention.
- Improves transparency of criminal justice system with a reporting system for arrests including racial data.
- Improves tracking and retention of rape kits for better protection for women.
- More equitable compensation for families of homicide victims. (More details on page 3)

### CAN at the

### March for Moms Rally!

Date: Sunday, May 6, 2018, 1-4pm

Meeting time: 12:45pm

Location: Tortoise and Hare sculpture located in the middle of Copley Square by the water fountain.

Contact: Hitomi Abe, CAN Coordinator at 617-823-3119.

## Healthy Start Program in DC

Heavenly Mitchell and Hitomi Abe led a workshop about partnering with the community to promote racial equity in birth outcomes through systems and policy change. They highlighted the work of the Boston Healthy Start work of the Boston Healthy Start Community Action

Network (CAN) as an example. CAN will be at the upcoming March for Moms on May 6<sup>th</sup>. (See side bar.)

While in D.C. for this national conference, Heavenly and Rich DeRosa met with staff in Senator Elizabeth Warren's office to advocate for federal support of Healthy Start programs.



*Hitomi Abe and Heavenly Mitchell with another presenter at the National Healthy Start Association*

## LAUNCH/MYCHILD Policy Work

Christy Moulin and Mira Kelsey, Directors of Early Childhood and Family Mental Health testified on the successes of the BPHC LAUNCH/MYCHILD program last summer in front of the Special Commission on Behavioral Health Promotion and Upstream Prevention. The program's work was included in the Special Commission's [full report](#) released this month.

*MyChild: A local model of success* can be found on page 42.

Through strong partnership, providers in Massachusetts have developed a new and exciting model for early childhood mental health integration in pediatric primary care. After piloting in seven sites in Boston, LAUNCH/MYCHILD is now expanding across the state under the joint leadership of the

Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Department of Public Health, and BPHC. The program has resulted in reduced levels of parenting stress and depression and improved child mental health outcomes, in comparison to their own screening scores upon entry into the LAUNCH/MYCHILD.

## Surgeon General Recommends Carrying Narcan

Surgeon General Jerome Adams has emphasized the importance of the overdose-reversing drug naloxone and is recommending people learn how to use it and keep it within reach. Research shows that when naloxone and overdose education are available to community members, overdose deaths decrease in those communities. Increasing the availability and targeted distribution of

naloxone is a critical component of the efforts to reduce opioid-related overdose deaths.

In Massachusetts and most states, people can go to a pharmacy or community-based program, to get trained on naloxone administration, and receive naloxone by "standing order," i.e., without a patient-specific prescription. BPHC offers many ways to get [trained](#) and learn about the use of

naloxone. There are online videos, regularly scheduled classes at Finland offered during the afternoon and night, and a course which issues a Certificate of Training. In 2017, 23,000 individuals were trained.

Additionally, the Trump Administration extended the Opioid Public Health Crisis Declaration. The 90-day extension does not include any additional funding.

## More Equitable Victim Compensation

*An Act Amending the Victim Compensation Statute* sponsored by Representative Evandro Carvalho is part of the Criminal Justice Reform Law (story on page 2). The bill was included in Mayor Martin Walsh's legislative agenda and

has been supported by BPHC. The provision enables families of homicide victims to apply and receive compensation from the state's Victim Compensation Fund to pay for burial costs. Previously, victims' families were prohibited

from receiving these funds if the death involved illegal activity by the victim. Moving forward, family members of murder victims who apply cannot be denied reimbursement for funeral and burial costs.

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