

Managed Care, Overall Cuts Remain Top Issues As Senate Reviews Medicaid Elements In Budget

The Senate is looking at ways to set the state's behavioral health Medicaid redesign in motion when it's ready, the chairman of a budget panel said.

Providers have urged the upper chamber to keep the changes made by the House to delay the planned new billing codes and managed care carve in. The administration, meanwhile, has said a delay is not necessary and will just push back access to more services.

Sen. Bob Hackett (R-London), chair of the Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee, said the administration has assured lawmakers and providers that the system will be ready July 1 as planned, but that they're also ready for problems that arise.

"They've said to us that if the system won't operate efficiently from the beginning, they'll delay it themselves," he said in an interview.

Other possibilities include a plan that would set the date for implementation once a certain threshold is reached for the number of providers that are able to test it successfully.

The subcommittee has heard extensive testimony on several issues, chiefly the behavioral health piece and the administration's plans to revamp long-term care.

While the House delayed both provisions in its overhaul of the budget bill (HB 49), moving the behavioral health redesign back six months and the shift of long-term services and supports into managed care back to 2021, it's too early to tell where the Senate will land.

"It's a work in progress," Sen. Hackett said.

On the long-term care issue, Sen. Hackett said the committee has heard compelling testimony from both sides. Some groups that were originally opposed to the plan, including LeadingAge Ohio, have expressed openness to the managed care proposal.

The overall cost of the budget remains a looming problem, Sen. Hackett said. The Senate is expected to make deeper cuts to the already tight budget, and with Medicaid accounting for much of the spending, Sen. Hackett said they will have to find something to cut.

"The House really put the onus on making most of the cuts to us," Sen. Hackett said.

The senator said lawmakers would like to avoid cuts to programs that will save money and in areas that haven't seen an increase in funding for a long time.

"The key is we still have to balance this budget," he said.

