Provider and Payer Advisory Task Force Meeting #1 Summary

Date: January 22, 2026, 9:00 am – 12:00pm

Minnesota Humanities Center, Library

Meeting Summary and Key Themes

Meeting Overview

The Provider and Payer Advisory Task Force (PPATF) convened for its first meeting to support the work of the Center for Health Care Affordability (CHCA). The task force brings together stakeholders with experience across health care delivery, insurance, and policy to provide input on ways to make health care more affordable for Minnesotans. The discussion focused on building a shared understanding of health care cost challenges; learning about the Health Care Affordability Advisory Task Force's work to date, and identifying areas where the group can contribute practical ideas and feedback.

Welcome and Introductions

Alex Caldwell, Director of the Center for Health Care Affordability, and Carol Backstrom, Assistant Commissioner at the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), welcomed task force members and reviewed the goals for the meeting. Members joined both in person and online.

Task force members then introduced themselves and shared the motivations which led them to commit to the effort and what they hope to see from this task force. Members highlighted the need for cross-sector collaboration, creativity, and innovation as key to addressing the challenge of health care spending growth. Several members mentioned "upstream" factors such as health-related social needs that affect health care utilization and spending, and the need to pay specific attention to the needs of vulnerable populations.

Matt Anderson and Sheila Kiscaden, co-chairs of the Health Care Affordability Advisory Task Force (HCAATF), also introduced themselves. They asked PPATF members to help identify opportunities for reducing health care spending growth and to help position the Center for lasting success beyond the two-year term of the task forces.

Role of the Provider and Payer Advisory Task Force

Alex Caldwell then reviewed the role of the Provider and Payer Advisory Task Force and how it fits into the state's broader affordability efforts. The Center for Health Care Affordability is charged with identifying what drives health care spending in Minnesota and advancing solutions that can help slow health care cost growth over time while preserving access to high-quality care.

As an advisory group, the PPATF will offer ideas and feedback to the HCAATF, which will make formal recommendations to the MDH Commissioner. In addition, the task force will focus on finding solutions for the commercially-insured population, where affordability burdens are most pronounced.

Alex also clarified that the group's ideas may include more than policy-oriented solutions. Recommendations could include pilot programs, demonstration projects, or other innovative approaches.

Health Care Affordability in Minnesota: An Overview

Stefan Gildemeister, Director of MDH's Health Economics Program, provided an overview of health care spending in Minnesota. The presentation was intended to establish a shared set of facts about where health care dollars are being spent and how spending has changed over time and encourage members to raise questions about areas of interest.

Following the presentation, facilitator Julie Sonier led a discussion to gather members' reactions. Members generally felt the data matched what they see in their own work, but they also said they want to explore certain areas in more depth.

Reactions to the presentation included desires to review:

- Spending driver and trend data in more detail, including pharmaceutical, out-of-pocket, other utilization, and health conditions that contribute to most spending growth

- Quality, access, and value data in order to identify problem areas and evaluate impacts of policies that reduce spending growth

- Comparative data on health care spending in Minnesota versus other states and countries

In addition, several members expressed concern that a focus on commercial spending may be too narrow, risking missing the bigger picture issues that drive spending growth. For example, Medicare and Medicaid are major payers in greater Minnesota and have significant impact on rural communities.

Lastly, the task force discussed how advanced technologies have the potential to streamline health care, improve productivity, and reduce cost.

Foundational Work of the Health Care Affordability Advisory Task Force

Julie Sonier, the meeting facilitator, shared background on the work already completed by the Health Care Affordability Advisory Task Force. That group has met three times and developed shared definitions, values, and guiding principles related to affordability.

PPATF members reviewed definitions, values, and principles, and offered feedback. Overall, members expressed appreciation for the strong foundation that has already been built.

Julie then described a framework the HCAATF is using to better understand the problem of health care affordability. She also shared examples of strategies other states have tried to address health care affordability challenges. She noted that the purpose of sharing these

strategies is to offer examples of what other states are doing and not to recommend or limit what Minnesota should do.

Lastly, Julie shared several possible priority topics that have been identified by the HCAATF including:

- Non-value-added spending, including administrative complexity and spending that does not improve access or quality
- High and widely varying prices
- Population-based payment
- Health insurance benefit design

Discussion

In an open discussion, PPATF members shared ideas about where they believe this group could have significant impact. Key points raised included:

- The potential for telehealth to reduce certain costs
- Whether some high-cost services could be better coordinated at a regional level
- Opportunities for collaboration across state lines, since some Minnesota health systems serve patients in multiple states
- The importance of improving health literacy so patients can make informed decisions
- Ways to make end-of-life care more centered on patient wishes and less focused on high-cost interventions
- Investing in primary care to help prevent and manage chronic conditions
- Understanding health care operational costs and opportunities to drive down the cost of providing care
- **Feasibility and practicality are important considerations in recommending solutions**
- Making sure this group does not duplicate work already being done by other state efforts, such as the Prescription Drug Advisory Board (PDAB)

Toward the end of the discussion, members asked for clarification about whether the task force should focus only on affordability or also consider access and quality. Several members said these issues are closely connected and should be considered together, even if affordability remains the central focus.

Closing and Next Steps

Alex Caldwell closed the meeting by thanking members for their thoughtful participation. She reminded the group that the next PPATF meeting will take place on March 27. The next meeting of the Health Care Affordability Advisory Task Force will be held on February 25, and PPATF members are welcome to attend.

Members may also receive a short survey to gather additional ideas, especially about ways to reduce health care spending that does not add value to patient care.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR HEALTH CARE AFFORDABILITY

The Minnesota Center for Health Care Affordability at the Minnesota Department of Health is committed to making health care more affordable for all Minnesotans.

The Center identifies cost drivers, provides transparent research, and advances solutions that stabilize health care spending so that Minnesotans can afford the high-quality care they need.

Minnesota Department of Health
Center for Health Care Affordability
625 Robert Street N
651-201-5000
Health.Affordability@state.mn.us
www.health.state.mn.us/data/affordability/index.html