

OVERHEARD: WHAT'S BEING SAID AND WRITTEN ABOUT INDIANA'S LONG TERM CARE SYSTEM AND SENATE BILL 493

In Evansville...

Server says health plan's 'time is right'

(Excerpt from article) By ROBERTA HEIMAN Courier & Press staff writer 464-7432 or rheiman@evansville.net January 28, 2003

For the 27,000 Hoosiers on waiting lists for home-based care and community services, there might be a silver lining to Indiana's fiscal crisis. The state could save millions of dollars by paying for their care instead of pouring \$1.17 billion a year into Hoosier nursing homes, where nearly a fourth of beds stand empty, proponents say. It's not a new issue. But the state's current budget deficit could finally prompt legislators to act on it, said state Sen. Greg Server, R-Evansville. "The time is right," he added. "Now is the perfect opportunity." Server said he knows some people will question whether Indiana can afford to make the change, but, "The better question is whether Indiana can afford not to make this transition."

In Bloomington...

Long-term reform makes long-term sense

(Excerpt from an article appearing in) The Hoosier Times

There's a lot of legal language in it (SB 493), but the essence is that it would make it easier for some of Indiana's most vulnerable citizens — the elderly and those who have disabilities — to stay in their own homes and their own communities instead of being forced into institutional care. According to The Generations Project, a not-for-profit advocacy group, Indiana spends \$1.4 billion on long-term care annually. About 84 percent of that is spent providing nursing home care. More than common sense indicates that most people would prefer some version of home-based care to going into a nursing home. Consider these facts: 27,000 Hoosiers are on waiting lists for home care services; at the same time, 15,000 nursing home beds in the state are empty. The numbers back the common sense. But the concept is just right for Indiana and its citizens. And in the long run, it would be economical. Those are words lawmakers should take seriously, particularly in tough economic times.

In South Bend...

Bill aims at boosting home care

HOMETOWN: LESSONS FROM LIVING

(Excerpt from an article) By JUDY BRADFORD February 10, 2003 The South Bend Tribune

...The trouble is, Indiana is so far behind other states in making sure more people have access to in-home care. Hoosiers have to be "more poor" to receive Medicaid-funded services in their home than if they choose to go to a nursing home. And it's costing taxpayers millions because older adults often go to nursing homes when they don't really need to. When compared with other states that have better and more affordable long-term care systems, Indiana spends fewer dollars on home care, assisted living, adult day care, home-delivered meals, transportation and other home and community-based services. Senate Bill 493 would fix that. It would allow applicants with a monthly income of \$1,635 or less to receive services in their home. Currently, you cannot have more than \$545 per month. The bill would also prevent liens from being placed on a home where the occupant is receiving services. Moreover, it would protect spouses, so they don't have to "spend down" so much in order for their mate to receive Medicaid-paid services in the home. It would also make it more feasible for someone to move back home after living in a nursing facility, by having Medicaid-funded services "follow" them wherever they go. Lastly, and possibly most importantly, Senate Bill 493 would require that a CHOICE (Community and Home Options to Institutional Care for the Elderly) recipient receive services within 60 days after becoming eligible -- thus ending long waiting lists for this state program. A lot of organizations for older adults are trying to reverse Indiana's long-standing dependence on nursing homes. With the slogan "There's No Place Like Home," they truly believe that when people have more control over their aging, the world becomes a much saner and more merciful place to live in. (Not to mention less expensive.) And it's going to change. If today's older adults don't succeed, then tomorrow's will. The first wave of baby boomers is rapidly approaching retirement, and they're accustomed to having lots of options and information, and making their own decisions. But why wait until then?

Care: State system created in 1960s, 70s when nursing homes were only option

Indiana's system was created in the 1960s and 1970s, when nursing home care was seen as the sole option, Phillips said. "We believe there is quickly becoming a crisis in long term health care and Indiana is failing to balance its health care system," William Phillips, The Generations Project. State Rep. Clyde Kersey, D-Terre Haute calls the bill "a good idea. The quality of life is so much better when a person has the option to stay at home."

(Excerpt from article) By Howard Greninger, Tribune Star

In Vincennes...

Tough choices ahead for legislators

(Excerpt from editorial) By GAYLE R. ROBBINS, associate news editor, Vincennes Sun Commercial

Politics, as the master, Harry S. Truman, was fond of pointing out, is the science of government.

Truman believed politics, ie., government, was about getting the public's business done, not just efficiently but also effectively. It did little good for a politician to promote how much money he had saved taxpayers if, in the process of saving that money, what used to be called the public welfare was cheapened and made worse. One of the bills under consideration being closely watched by area social service providers is Senate Bill 493, which would expand the availability of home and community-based care options. And that's the case Jacoby and others will be making to legislators as the current session moves along. "There probably would be, at the beginning, more money that would have to be allocated to the program to meet all the current demand," she stated. "But in the long run, as the studies from other states have shown, it's less expensive to provide care in a home-based setting, there will be savings." So it all comes down to what choice legislators will make. Politically, at a time when public revenues are in short supply and the mantra is to cut, cut, cut the budget, it would take real courage for a legislator to support adding to state spending. But, as Truman would be quick to point out, you cannot substitute efficiency in public finance for the effective delivery of public services - that is, you cannot do it for long without ultimately destroying the public welfare. There are tough choices to make.

Robbins is an associate news editor with the Sun-Commercial.

In Fort Wayne...

Proposal would change spending for long-term care

Medicaid, CHOICE clients would have more options.

(Excerpt from article) By Jennifer L. Boen of The News-Sentinel

A couple years ago, Nick Heiny tried to find help for his south-side Fort Wayne neighbors who needed home care. "I contacted the Area III Agency on Aging to see about getting them on the CHOICE program," which pays for in-home services. "But the agency said it would be at least two years because they had such a long waiting list. They only needed it for eight months - that's how long (the husband) had to live. I was told he would have to go to a nursing home," Heiny said. That situation and similar ones is what drew the 89-year-old to Monday's meeting announcing proposed legislation that would call for changes in the way Medicaid and CHOICE - or Community and Home Options to Institutional Care for the Elderly - dollars are spent. "It is time for Indiana to have a long-term care system for both people who need long-term care services and for taxpayers," said Paul Severance, executive director of United Senior Action, a statewide senior advocacy group pushing the legislation. Senate Bill 493, sponsored by Greg Server, R-Evansville, and John Broden, D-South Bend, mandates Indiana Family and Social Services administration establish a home- and community-based long-term care service program.

Information compiled by The Generations Project, an alliance of senior citizen and human service organizations. The Project seeks to raise awareness about the growing crisis in long term care in Indiana. For more information about long term care in Indiana or The Generations Project, please visit us online at <http://www.generationsproject.org>; call Will Phillips at 317-423-7108 or John Cardwell at 317-423-7102; or write The Generations Project, c/o AARP Indiana, Suite 1275, One North Capitol Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46204.

