

NNAMDI O. CHUKWUOCHA
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
1st District



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE OF DELAWARE
411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

COMMITTEES
Health & Human Development, Chair
Veterans Affairs, Chair
Education, Gaming & Parimutuels, Appropriations,
Corrections
Delaware Legislative Black Caucus, Chair

House Health & Human Development Committee Minutes
1.14.26
House Committee Recording

Prior to the Committee's start, Chair Chukwuocha announced that the meeting would be moved from the House Chamber to the Joint Finance Committee Room due to technical issues.

Chair Nnamdi Chukwuocha called the meeting to order 12:01p.m.

Members present:

Rep. Chukwuocha, Chair
Rep. Neal, Vice Chair
Rep. Burns
Rep. Heffernan
Rep. Johnson
Rep. Morrison
Rep. Ross Levin
Rep. Kamela Smith
Rep. Snyder-Hall
Rep. Jones Giltner
Rep. Hilovsky
Rep. Postles
Rep. Micheal Smith

Chair Chukwuocha introduced Agenda Item No. 1: **HB 224 AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 16 AND TITLE 24 TO THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO REGISTRATION OF DEATH.** *Time Stamp: 12:02.*

HB 224, sponsored by Rep. Johnson, allows licensed Physician Assistants (PA) in Delaware to pronounce death and complete medical certification of death. This allows for the health care system to work more efficiently, especially during periods of health surges such as COVID-19 or severe flu seasons. Patients often experience longer wait times due to needing an attending physical to pronounce time of death. By allowing this same privilege to PAs, they are given more professional discretion and families are afforded greater peace. The bill also eliminates registered nurses from the list of practitioners authorized to complete a medical certification of death, as it conflicts with the regulation set in Title 24.

Rep. Hilovsky and Rep. Jones Gilner voiced support for this bill as it will streamline health care and support health care workers within Delaware. Rep. Johnson voiced appreciation for their support and added that further legislation is needed to strengthen and elevate the position of PA's

in Delaware.

Chair Chukwuocha opened the floor for public comment. *Time Stamp 12:06p.m*

Members of the public who voiced their support of the legislation include Christina Bryan from Delaware Healthcare Association, Maridelle Dizon from the Division of Public Health, Bethany Melo, PA from Christiana Care, and Brad S. Hudson, PA, from the Delaware Academy of Physicians Assistants.

A motion was made by Rep. Hilovsky and seconded by Rep. Neal to release HB224 from committee; motion carried. Yes = 11 (Chukwuocha, Neal, Burns, Johnson, Morrison, Ross Levin, K. Smith, Snyder-Hall, Jones Giltner, Hilovsky, M. Smith); No = 0; Absent = 5 (Harris, Heffernan, Hensley, Postles, Shupe). This bill was released from committee with a F=12, M=0, U=0 vote.

Chair Chukwuocha introduced Agenda Item No. 2: **HB 231 AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 16 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO UNIFORM HEALTH DATA.** *Time Stamp 12:15*

HB 231, sponsored by Rep. K. Smith, updates Delaware's uniform health data law to require emergency department (ER) data reporting to the Hospital Discharge Technical Advisory Committee. Currently, the law only requires hospitals to share discharge data, failing to include the vast majority of emergency department patient care. A hospital's emergency department is often the first point of contact for drug overdoses, injuries, and public health issues. Emergency Departments provide critical data essential for funding and to evaluate greater health trends within the State. This bill was developed with Delaware's major hospital to ensure data collection does not impose burdens to staff. By including emergency department data, the State can gain a clearer picture of emerging health trends as well as health care gaps, which can improve Delaware health systems' records.

Rep. Burns asked if data is collected from urgent care center admissions and submitted to the Hospital Discharge Technical Advisory Committee. Ms. Marielle Dizon from the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH), answered no; data from urgent care centers is not collected.

Chair Chukwuocha opened the floor for public comment. *Time Stamp 12:19*

Members of the public who voiced their support for the legislation included Christina Bryan from Delaware Healthcare Association, Cimone Sylver representing Christiana Care, and Maridelle Dizon from Delaware Division of Public Health.

A motion was made by Rep. Johnson and seconded by Rep. Burns to release HB 231 from committee; motion carried. Yes = 12 (Chukwuocha, Neal, Burns, Johnson, Morrison, Ross Levin, K. Smith, Snyder-Hall, Jones Giltner, Hilovsky, Postles, M. Smith); No = 0; Absent = 4 (Harris, Heffernan, Hensley, Shupe). This bill was released from committee with a F=11, M=0, U=0 vote.

Chair Chukwuocha introduced Agenda Item No. 3: **HB 260 AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 16 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE DELAWARE HEALTH CARE COMMISSION HEALTH CARE PROVIDER LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM.** *Time Stamp: 12:26.*

HB 260, sponsored by Rep. Hilovsky, would extend eligibility for the Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program (“Program”) to include optometrists, with a maximum of two recipients per year. The Program provides grants of up to \$50,000 to primary care providers practicing in underserved communities in Delaware. The Program’s purpose is to assist in the significant cost associated with completing a doctoral education. Quality optometrists are essential and have a large responsibility in primary care as they can be the first to identify underlying health care issues in patients. Delaware has steadily seen an increase in population, specifically with senior residences, creating a backlog of patients in need of care. Southern Delaware is struggling to attract more physicians. Expanding the Program will help draw in new young talent to Sussex County.

Rep. Chukwuocha inquired about patient ratios for optometrists throughout Delaware.

Dr. Alyssa Long from the Delaware Optometric Association, replied that she did not know about patient ratios but was able to provide patient wait time for optometrists by county: 11 days for Kent County, 20 days for New Castle County, and between 30-45 days for Sussex County.

Rep. Snyder-Hall sought clarification on why the legislation limits the Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program to only two recipients per year.

Rep. Hilovsky reposed that through discussion with Delaware’s Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), the Program can only be awarded to two recipients due to fiscal considerations. Rep Hilovsky expressed his hope to expand the Program in the future.

Rep. Neal voiced support for the bill and echoed how optometrists are the first line of defense in identifying underlying health care issues.

Chair Chukwuocha opened the floor for public comment. *Time Stamp 12:36*

Members of the public who voiced their support of the legislation include Dr. Allisa Long from the Delaware Optometrist Association.

A motion was made by Rep. K. Smith and seconded by Rep. Burns to release HB 260 from committee; motion carried. Yes = 12 (Chukwuocha, Neal, Burns, Johnson, Morrison, Ross Levin, K. Smith, Snyder-Hall, Jones Giltner, Hilovsky, Postles, M. Smith); No = 0; Absent = 4 (Harris, Heffernan, Hensley, Shupe). This bill was released from committee with a F=10, M=0, U=0 vote.

Chair Chukwuocha adjourned the meeting 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Sydney Johnston, Legislative Fellow

Attendance List

- Christina Bryan, Delaware Healthcare Association
- Dr. Alissa Long, Delaware Optometric Association
- Bethany Melo, Christiana Care
- Cimon Sylver, Christiana Care
- Maridelle Dizon, DHSS, Division of Public Health
- Brad S Hudson, Delaware Academy of Physician Assistants
- Elisabeth Massa, DSHH
- Alexa Scaglietti, DSHH



January 13, 2026

The Honorable Kendra Johnson
411 Legislative Ave
Dover, DE 19901

RE: DHA Supporting Comments on HB 224, Physician Assistants to Pronounce Death

Dear Representative Johnson,

On behalf of Delaware's hospitals, health systems, and related healthcare organizations, thank you for the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 224, which authorizes physician assistants to pronounce death and sign death certificates in Delaware.

Strengthening Delaware's healthcare workforce and ensuring access to high-quality care are among the Delaware Healthcare Association's (DHA) top advocacy priorities for 2026. HB 224 aligns with these priorities by ensuring physician assistants, who are highly trained healthcare professionals and integral members of the care team, can practice at the top of their license.

Allowing physician assistants to pronounce death and complete death certificates helps reduce delays that can occur when a physician is not immediately available, particularly in hospital and emergency department settings. This change supports timely care transitions, eases administrative burdens, and allows healthcare teams to operate more efficiently while continuing to meet the needs of patients and families.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue and for the opportunity to share DHA's support for HB 224. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues in the General Assembly to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Christina Bryan'.

Christina Bryan
Vice President of External Affairs

Brian Frazee
President & CEO

ChristianaCare
Janice E. Nevin, MD, MPH
President & CEO
DHA Board Chair

Bayhealth
Terry Murphy
President & CEO
DHA Board Vice-Chair

TidalHealth Nanticoke
Penny Short, MSM, BSN, RN
President
DHA Board Secretary & Treasurer

Beebe Healthcare
David A. Tam, MD, MBA
President & CEO

Saint Francis Hospital
Marlow Levy, RN, MBA,
FACHE
President

Nemours Children's Health
Laura Kowal, MPT, JD
Interim President
Delaware Valley Executive Vice
President, General Council

Delaware Healthcare Association
Brian W. Frazee
President & CEO



The Honorable Nnamdi Chukwuocha, Chair
The Honorable DeShanna Neal, Vice Chair
House Health & Human Development Committee
Delaware General Assembly
411 Legislative Avenue
Dover, DE 19901

January 14, 2026

Re: Letter of Support on Behalf of Christiana Care Health System for House Bill 231

Dear Representative Chukwuocha and Representative Neal,

On behalf of ChristianaCare, I write to express support for House Bill 231, An act to amend title 16 of the Delaware code relating to uniform health data.

Reliable, standardized health data is foundational to health equity. For hospitals working to improve care quality and reduce disparities, accurate data on utilization patterns, patient demographics, service needs, and outcomes is essential. HB 231 strengthens the state's capacity to collect and analyze comprehensive data across inpatient and emergency settings, allowing policymakers, health systems, and community partners to identify inequities, measure progress, and target interventions where they are needed most. Including emergency department data in statewide analysis helps reveal patterns in urgent care access, chronic disease exacerbations, and barriers to preventive care.

The bill also ensures that data reporting processes are efficient and mutually agreed upon between hospitals and the State agency, which respects operational realities while improving data quality. This cooperative approach supports better resource planning and reduces administrative burden. From a health equity standpoint, standardized and transparent health data:

- Enables identification of disparities by race, ethnicity, geography, and socioeconomic status;
- Informs targeted public health responses to emerging needs;
- Improves care coordination across settings; and
- Supports accountability and continuous improvement in patient outcomes.

We believe that HB 231 will enhance Delaware's capacity to use actionable data to advance equitable care. As we confront widening health disparities in chronic disease, access to care, and outcomes, modernizing our uniform health data infrastructure is an important step toward a more equitable health system for all Delawareans.

Sincerely,
Cimone Sylver, PhD, MPA.
Manager, Policy and Advocacy



January 14, 2026

The Honorable Kamela Smith
411 Legislative Ave
Dover, DE 19901

Brian Frazee
President & CEO

RE: DHA Supporting Comments for Uniform Health Data (HB 231)

ChristianaCare
Janice E. Nevin, MD, MPH
President & CEO
DHA Board Chair

Dear Representative Smith,

Bayhealth
Terry Murphy
President & CEO
DHA Board Vice-Chair

On behalf of Delaware's hospitals, health systems, and related healthcare organizations, thank you for the opportunity to express the Delaware Healthcare Association's (DHA) support for House Bill 231, which requires that emergency department data is included in the data that the Hospital Discharge Technical Advisory Committee studies.

TidalHealth Nanticoke
Penny Short, MSM, BSN, RN
President
DHA Board Secretary & Treasurer

Delaware hospitals care for patients through more than 400,000 emergency department visits and 90,000 inpatient admissions per year. Currently, Delaware hospitals are required to submit claims and billing information for hospital inpatient stays to help the state track healthcare utilization and services. The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services reached out to DHA last year to request that hospitals also submit data on patients who come to the emergency department for care but are not admitted for a hospital stay. Including emergency department data in this advisory committee's studies will help provide a more complete picture of patient utilization, care trends, and system-wide challenges across the state.

Beebe Healthcare
David A. Tam, MD, MBA
President & CEO

Saint Francis Hospital
Marlow Levy, RN, MBA,
FACHE
President

We appreciate the collaborative approach the Department took on this issue, working with DHA and our members to ensure the submission of the additional data would not create additional administrative burden for hospitals. We also appreciate their commitment to continuing to work with DHA on ways to improve the timeliness in which data collected by the state is made available for hospitals and the public.

Nemours Children's Health
Laura Kowal, MPT, JD
Interim President
Delaware Valley Executive Vice
President, General Council

Delaware Healthcare Association
Brian W. Frazee
President & CEO

Thank you for the opportunity to share DHA's support for HB 231 and for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues in the General Assembly to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Christina Bryan'.

Christina Bryan
Vice President of External Affairs



January 14, 2026

The Honorable Jeff Hilovsky
411 Legislative Ave
Dover, DE 19901

RE: DHA Comments on HB 260 relating to the Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program

Dear Representative Hilovsky,

On behalf of Delaware's hospitals, health systems, and related healthcare organizations, thank you for the opportunity for the Delaware Healthcare Association (DHA) to provide comments on HB 260 relating to Delaware's Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program (HCPLRP).

Strengthening Delaware's healthcare workforce is one of DHA's top advocacy priorities and the Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program plays a critical role in this effort. The HCPLRP was established in 2021 as a state-funded initiative administered by the Delaware Health Care Commission (DHCC) and was designed to strengthen Delaware's healthcare workforce by offering medical education debt relief to primary care providers who commit to practicing in underserved areas of the state. By reducing the financial burden of medical education loan repayment, the HCPLRP serves as a powerful recruitment and retention tool attracting many new primary care providers to Delaware.

Since its inception, the program has been underutilized, and DHA is committed to working with the state to ensure the funds are used as intended and to their fullest impact. In 2023, the eligibility for the program was broadened beyond the initial primary care practitioners to include more behavioral health providers as well as dentists. With many sectors of the healthcare workforce facing a shortage and the demands for healthcare services increasing in our increasingly growing and aging state, it's important that we have the right incentives in place to attract and retain a robust healthcare workforce.

Last year, the Delaware General Assembly passed legislation that will provide needed data on Delaware's current healthcare workforce landscape so we can better identify the gaps and shortages. This data will be important for creating and expanding healthcare workforce incentives in the future that target our areas and professions in greatest need.

DHA and our members appreciate your leadership in prioritizing the healthcare workforce and thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Christina Bryan'.

Christina Bryan
Vice President of External Affairs

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