

Survey calls for more government involvement in West Virginia health care

Posted By [Steven Allen Adams](#) On January 8, 2012 @ 2:49 pm In [Featured](#), [Governor](#), [Health Care](#), [Legislature](#), [News](#), [Regulations](#), [West Virginia](#) | [Comments Disabled](#)

By [Steven Allen Adams](#) ^[1] | West Virginia Watchdog

CHARLESTON — According to survey results, West Virginia's health care system needs more government leadership, collaboration, transparency, and system improvement. But the survey leaves out the opinions of consumers.

Members of Subcommittee A of the Joint Committee on Health heard a report today from Paul Miller, the director of policy outreach and advocacy for the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy (WVCBP), a liberal think tank.

The WVCBP teamed up with West Virginians for Affordable Health Care and conducted a non-scientific survey, interviewing 33 leaders in the health care, insurance, and political sector. Respondents included legislators, hospital and primary care center workers, current and former state officials, and medical school employees.

"This survey is designed to look at the national framework and if it can be adopted through policy changes and legislative changes," Miller said. "This survey is intended to ask the questions of policy makers and legislators who drive that policy framework."

One demographic not included in the survey: consumers of health care. State Sen. Donna Boley (R-Pleasants) asked Miller why the opinions of health care consumers were not included in the survey.

"It wouldn't be relevant, since consumers aren't driving the policy process," Miller said. "The question is how applicable is this framework to West Virginia? To answer that question you have to ask experts."

"I can tell you that the opinions of the consumers or the patients are much different than those who deliver," Boley said. "I'm really thinking you need to take that into consideration. There is a 100 percent difference, but the consumer is the one getting the service. They should have some say in how they think it's being delivered."

Survey questions were based on a 2010 study by the [Commonwealth Fund](#) ^[2], which interviewed health care officials in 10 high performing and 10 low performing states. According a 2009 Commonwealth Fund State Scorecard on Health System Performance, West Virginia ranked 35th.

The 2010 Commonwealth Fund study found that leaders in high performing states said their performance was due to strong government leadership, collaboration among stakeholders, price and quality transparency, and consistent policies.

According to the WVCBP survey, 89 percent said that strong government leadership was important. Most of the respondents said West Virginia has a poor leadership record on health-related issues.

"We need a governor who would understand that a strong, healthy workforce is a precondition to economic development," said one respondent.

Another 60 percent said that West Virginia is not good at collaboration between state agencies and health care providers, with a history of successes and failures. Of those polled, 70 percent believe West Virginia does a poor job at collecting data on health outcomes and costs.

Both the state as a whole and the Governor's Office of Health Enhancement and Lifestyle Planning (GOHELP) received poor marks in the survey for data collection. GOHELP, created in 2009, was set up to coordinate the transformation of the state's health care system and the state's health policy initiatives.

The agency brings together the heads of several state agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Resources, the Insurance Commission, the Health Care Authority, the Public Employees Insurance Agency, and the Children's Health Insurance Program, as well as health industry officials, unions, business, and advocacy groups.

The survey data showed that respondents believe that population health, income, and education are important to health system performance. It went on to show that hospital readmission reductions could save as much as \$41.3 million in Medicare costs yearly.

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care will released the full report at the end of January.

[Follow us on Twitter](#) ^[3] — [Like us on Facebook](#) ^[4] — [Subscribe to email](#) ^[5] — [Donate](#) ^[6]

Related articles

- [Lawmakers receive update on GOHELP](#) ^[7] (westvirginia.watchdog.org)

[8]

