

BRAITHWAITE, UNDERLAND: WORK REMAINS ON HEALTH REFORM

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by John George
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Another day of comments about the health-care reform legislation signed into law Tuesday by President Obama:

Kenneth J. Braithwaite II, regional executive for the Delaware Valley Healthcare Council, said while the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act and the accompanying reconciliation bill “may not be perfect, they move the country forward on key goals to expand health coverage, reform health insurance, and transform health-care delivery.”

Braithwaite said hospitals have long pushed for the expansion of coverage to improve access to care, nationally committing to \$155 billion in payment changes over 10 years to help fund the reform measures.

“We see firsthand the damage that can result when uninsured patients delay seeking treatment until health issues become crises,” he said. “Hospitals in the state and region are committed to working with stakeholders and lawmakers to make refinements and ensure reform’s long-term success.”

Carl W. Underland, CEO of the South Jersey health-care consulting firm Carlisle and Associates, also said a lot of work needs to be done going forward.

“While health reform might be medicine we need, what remains ahead is the daunting task of funding the expansion of the newly insured,” Underland said. “We need to unleash the kinetic power of partnerships between insurer and provider. For too long, these stakeholders have assumed an adversarial and often hostile posture, which only disenfranchises the end user — the patient/subscriber — and drives costs.

“As long as war over reimbursement rates continues, the prevailing trend will be a myopic, unit-cost view of the health-care landscape,” he said. “True partnerships through aligned clinical and economic interests can shift the view towards total cost and coordination of care opportunities, resulting in true containment of costs through shared interests of provider and insurer in pursuit of mutually desired outcomes.”