

# Abstract



## Palliative Care in Florida

Snapshot of a new report by Florida TaxWatch

Palliative care is the management of the physical, psychological, spiritual, and social needs of patients, most often patients with nonterminal chronic or serious conditions. The services help patients manage the disease and their treatment to improve their overall functionality while providing relief from symptoms, such as the reduction of pain and suffering, and reducing stress for patients and their families.

The underlying goal is to provide coordinated services that improve the patient's life – essentially to provide the right care at the right time for each patient given their condition and situation. The additional benefit of this highly individualized care, as studies have shown, is an overall reduction in treatment costs.

TaxWatch research shows that community-based palliative care warrants special attention as a distinct and promising healthcare service.

### THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS.

**THE LEGISLATURE MUST DEVELOP A REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR PALLIATIVE CARE.** For the state to realize the cost-savings benefits of palliative care, the payment/reimbursement system must be addressed. To ensure the financial stability of palliative care providers, a system of care reimbursement that can be used by public and private payors must be developed, along with a definition of the services that constitute palliative care.

The regulations must balance the competing interests of protecting patients from being harmed by providers that do not have the expertise or capacity to provide appropriate and comprehensive palliative care services and avoiding overly burdensome regulations that will stifle growth and expansion.

**ADDITIONALLY, THE LEGISLATURE SHOULD INVEST IN PROGRAMS THAT INCREASE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS WORKFORCE SHORTAGES.** Like with many areas in healthcare and long-term care, workforce shortages are a major barrier to expansion of palliative care. To address this issue, the Legislature should fund increased palliative medicine fellowships, provide incentives for palliative care fellows to remain in Florida, invest in expanding training programs for nurses, and fund internship opportunities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### A DELICATE BALANCE



The Legislature must create a regulatory framework for palliative care that balances the competing interests of protecting patients and avoiding overregulation that will stifle growth and expansion.

### EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Legislature should invest in programs that increase training opportunities to address workforce shortages, including palliative medicine fellowships, incentives for fellows to stay in Florida, training programs for nurses, and internship opportunities.



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