



2024 SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

FELLOW PROJECTS AND REFLECTIONS



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FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Now in its tenth year, the annual Health Policy Commission (HPC) Summer Fellowship Program has dual goals of helping to achieve the Commonwealth's health care reform and cost containment goals while simultaneously providing hands-on educational opportunities to the next generation of health policy leaders. Each year, the Fellowship Program affords students the opportunity to engage in a ten-week, stand-alone policy or research project within one of the HPC's departments. As temporary full-time employees, fellows work closely with their supervisors to ensure they meet project benchmarks, deliver key presentations, and meet deadlines. The 2024 Summer Fellowship Program was conducted in a hybrid format. Fellows participated in both in-person and virtual programming, and worked from the HPC's offices alongside HPC staff on a recurring basis throughout the summer.

PEOPLE AND PROCESS

Applicants to this highly competitive program must be enrolled in a full-time master's, PhD, law, or medical program. For the 2024 Fellowship Program, the HPC received over 200 applications from students at universities around the world. The HPC is committed to embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion as core components of its hiring process. To reduce bias in the Fellowship Program selection process, identifying information including names and universities were redacted from applications upon receipt. After reviewing the redacted materials, HPC staff conducted virtual interviews with dozens of top applicants. Candidates were invited for interviews based on prior professional experience and their interests in health policy as outlined in their application materials. The ideal HPC fellow is a strong problem-solver, a clear and concise writer of technical and policy content, and possesses the ability to understand multiple stakeholder perspectives. Successful candidates are collaborative, self-motivated, and passionate about health policy.

STIPEND AND PROGRAMMING

In 2024, fellows were paid \$30 per hour for up to ten weeks (375 hours) of work. To enhance their time with the HPC, fellows were included in various activities and meetings and given access to some of the Commonwealth's most cutting-edge and forward-thinking policy making processes and staff. Fellows worked with their teams to guide a project from inception to completion, while also exploring the intersection of HPC goals and their own academic interests. In addition to their primary projects, fellows were offered a host of virtual programming and networking opportunities to allow them to better understand the varied facets of the HPC's work. Examples included:

- Joining policy meetings with HPC staff and key stakeholders;
- Attending meetings of the HPC's Board of Commissioners; and
- Participating in small, interactive virtual meetings on health policy with HPC commissioners and Advisory Council members.

At the conclusion of the summer, fellows were asked to share the product of their work and reflect on the Fellowship Program in a presentation to HPC leadership and staff.

THE HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION DEPARTMENTS

Under the leadership of Executive Director David Seltz and Deputy Executive Director Coleen Elstermeyer, MPP, the staff of the HPC is divided into six departments. Each department works on focused areas as well as collaborative, cross-agency projects to ensure that the HPC's responsibilities are achieved in a robust, transparent, and timely manner. Two executive departments have oversight and administrative duties, while four departments focus primarily on policy, research, and program operations.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF (COS)

The Office of the Chief of Staff (COS) ensures that the HPC produces timely, high-quality deliverables and informs the public and stakeholders of the HPC's mission, policies, and programs in a consistent and credible manner. This is completed through management of the HPC's external affairs efforts, including media, public, legislative, intergovernmental, and stakeholder relations. COS also manages the day-to-day administration of the HPC, including agency operations, human resources, fiscal management, special projects, and public events. The Office of the Chief of Staff is led by Hannah Kloomok.

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL (OGC)

The Office of the General Counsel provides legal counsel and advice on a wide range of strategic, policy, and operational issues for the agency. The Legal department is responsible for supporting the HPC's policy and legal work, including the development of regulations and support of agency compliance functions. The Office of the General Counsel is led by Lois H. Johnson.

HEALTH CARE TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION (HCTI)

The Health Care Transformation and Innovation (HCTI) department is responsible for developing a coordinated strategy to advance care delivery transformation policy and programs, including developing and implementing the agency's investment strategy. HCTI has administered several grant programs designed to catalyze care delivery transformation in the Commonwealth, beginning with the Community Hospital Acceleration, Revitalization, and Transformation ([CHART](#)) and Health Care Innovation Investment ([HCII](#)) programs, and continuing today with the [SHIFT-Care Challenge](#), Moving Massachusetts Upstream ([MassUP](#)), Cost-Effective, Coordinated Care for Caregivers and Substance Exposed Newborns ([C4SEN](#)), and Birth Equity and Support through the Inclusion of Doula Expertise ([BESIDE](#)) programs. These efforts collectively represent a key component of the HPC's overall efforts to increase health care quality, equity, and access while reducing cost growth in the Commonwealth. HCTI also advances the Commonwealth's goals of accelerating adoption of new integrated care models through state certification programs for patient-centered medical homes ([PCMHs](#)) and accountable care organizations ([ACOs](#)) and enhanced transparency of such efforts. The department – in collaboration with other state agencies and stakeholders – works to promote and align innovative care delivery and payment models and address upstream causes of poor health outcomes. Through these efforts, HCTI supports the HPC's vision of a care delivery system that reduces spending and improves health for all residents by delivering coordinated, patient-centered, and efficient health care that reflects patients' behavioral, social, and medical needs.

MARKET OVERSIGHT AND TRANSPARENCY (MOAT)

The Market Oversight and Transparency (MOAT) department is responsible for advancing the HPC's statutory charge to encourage a more value-based health care market. This includes (1) developing and implementing a first-in-the-nation [Registration of Provider Organizations](#) (RPO) program to provide transparency on the composition and function of provider organizations in the health care system, (2) tracking and evaluating the impact of significant health care provider changes on the competitive market and on the state's ability to meet the health care cost growth benchmark through review of [material change notices](#) (MCNs) and [cost and market impact reviews \(CMIRs\)](#), (3) evaluating the performance of individual health care providers and payers which threaten the health care cost growth benchmark and overseeing [Performance Improvement Plans](#) (PIPs) to improve the cost performance of such entities, and (4) collaborating with other HPC departments to catalyze improvements in the performance of the health care system. MOAT is led by Katherine (Kate) Scarborough Mills, Esq., MPH.

OFFICE OF PATIENT PROTECTION (OPP)

The Office of Patient Protection (OPP) safeguards important rights of health insurance consumers. Implementing certain provisions of [M.G.L. Chapter 1760](#), OPP regulates the internal grievance process for consumers who wish to challenge denials of coverage by health plans and regulates and administers the external review process for consumers who seek further review of adverse determinations by health plans based on medical necessity. OPP is also charged with regulating similar internal and external review processes for patients of Risk Bearing Provider Organizations and HPC-certified ACOs. OPP also administers and grants enrollment waivers to eligible individuals who seek to purchase non-group insurance when open enrollment is closed. Additionally, OPP assists consumers with general questions or concerns relating to health insurance. OPP is led by Nancy K. Ryan, Esq., MPH.

RESEARCH AND COST TRENDS (RCT)

The Research and Cost Trends (RCT) department fulfills the HPC's statutory charge to examine spending trends and underlying drivers and to develop evidence-based policy recommendations for strategies to increase the efficiency of the health care system. Using key data sources such as the Center for Health Information and Analysis' All-Payer Claims Database (APCD) and cutting-edge methods, RCT draws on significant research and analytical expertise to inform action to achieve the benchmark and the goals of Chapter 224. RCT is responsible for producing the HPC's annual Health Care Cost Trends Report and contributes subject matter expertise to the annual [Health Care Cost Trends Hearing](#), as well as special research projects as determined by the Executive Director and the Board. RCT is led by David Auerbach, PhD.

HPC SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM REFLECTIONS



ANNA ADELMAN

She/Her/Ella

JD, Boston University
School of Law

ANNA ADELMAN

Office of the General Counsel

When I first learned of the Health Policy Commission (HPC), I was drawn in by its commitment, values, mission and the undeniable impact it has on healthcare in our Commonwealth. As a rising third-year law student with a Master of Public Health and background as a behavioral health case manager, I'm driven by a deep-seated belief in the power of equitable law and policy to effect meaningful change. I'm eager to learn how to harness this power to advocate for and implement sustainable improvements in healthcare access, quality, and equity.

This summer, I had the distinct honor of working in the Office of the General Counsel at the HPC. My time at the HPC exceeded every expectation and became an experience that will shape my career. I was provided the opportunity to dive into the Massachusetts healthcare landscape, gaining practical legal and policy experience. Whether defining and summarizing the statutory and regulatory framework for "home care" in Massachusetts, analyzing the implications of the Supreme Court's decision in *Loper Bright*, or developing a primer on the failing firm defense, each project sharpened my understanding of the complex issues at play and honed my policy and legal research and writing skills. I also monitored updates to standardized substance use disorder consent forms in light of changes to 42 CFR part 2, developed a contract tracker for the HPC's investment programs, and contributed to the review of data use agreements. The challenging nature of the work was rooted in the intricate legal frameworks and nuanced statutory and regulatory interpretations required to address complex healthcare issues. Each task demanded a thorough understanding of the law, precise research, and careful application of legal principles. Each project pushed me to refine my legal reasoning, enhance my drafting skills, and deepen my understanding of healthcare law and policy—preparing me to navigate the complexities of health law and policy with greater confidence and expertise.

I am truly grateful for the chance to work alongside and learn from such motivated and dedicated professionals at the HPC, particularly those in the Office of the General Counsel and the Office of Patient Protection. I am also deeply appreciative of the opportunities provided by the HPC to speak with and learn from its Commissioners, Board Chairs, and Advisory Council members. Serving as a Fellow at the HPC and contributing to the advancement of health equity across the Commonwealth has been an incredible privilege, and I am committed to carrying the lessons and skills I've gained into my future career. My sincere thanks extend to Team Legal, OPP, and everyone at the HPC for their outstanding support and mentorship.



EMILY DOUCETTE
She/Her/Hers

MD, Tufts University
School of Medicine

EMILY DOUCETTE

Market Oversight and Transparency

As a current medical student and lifelong Massachusetts resident with interests in healthcare delivery, health systems, and health policy, I was fortunate to join the Market Oversight and Transparency (MOAT) team at the Health Policy Commission (HPC) this summer. This opportunity allowed me to directly engage with the intersection of law and health policy in Massachusetts, giving me the privilege to contribute to initiatives that have a tangible impact on the state's healthcare system.

My fellowship at the HPC was centered around two main projects. The first project involved a comprehensive review of state health plans across the country to understand how different states determine healthcare needs, project demand, and plan for the future. This work provided me with valuable insights into the methodologies and strategies that guide health planning. I then applied this knowledge during stakeholder interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities specific to health planning in Massachusetts. These interactions offered a firsthand look at the complexities involved in determining and forecasting healthcare needs and highlighted the critical role of stakeholder engagement in crafting effective and equitable health policies.

The second project focused specifically on analyzing acute care bed needs in Massachusetts, with a particular emphasis on inpatient oncology beds. I developed a framework to assess various factors influencing inpatient oncology bed need and demand, including cancer incidence trends and the impact of delayed diagnoses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis aimed to provide a more accurate projection of future bed needs and to inform planning efforts to ensure adequate capacity to meet the evolving healthcare demands of our communities.

I am so grateful to the MOAT team and the entire HPC for their mentorship and support this summer. Their welcoming and collaborative environment made the fellowship both impactful and rewarding. Witnessing their dedication to public service was inspiring, and it's a commitment I hope to carry into my future career as a physician. My time at the HPC offered invaluable insights into healthcare regulation and policymaking, highlighting the importance of diverse perspectives in state government. This experience has profoundly enriched my understanding of how state government can drive positive change in health policy, and I'm excited to carry this knowledge forward in my education and career.



**ANALISSA
GUTIERREZ**
She/Her/Hers

MPH, Boston
University School of
Public Health

ANALISSA GUTIERREZ

Health Care Transformation and Innovation

I joined the Health Policy Commission (HPC) as a Master of Public Health (MPH) student with a strong interest in evaluation methods and policy reform. With a background in public health research and a solid foundation and data driven evaluations, I was eager to explore community-centered evaluation strategies and investment programs that advance health equity across the Commonwealth.

During my time as an HPC Fellow, I focused on identifying best practices for integrating equity into the evaluation of HPC investment programs. My research included an in-depth examination of HCTI's current evaluation practices, interviews with experts and extensive research on racial equity evaluation tool kits. This role sharpened my ability to develop actionable recommendations that promote equitable evaluation practices within the HCTI team and deepened my appreciation for evaluation methods that elevate the voices of marginalized communities.

A highlight of my fellowship was presenting my initial research at an HCTI Open-Source event, where engaging discussions and feedback greatly enriched my perspective. I also led a Health Equity Book Club that examined the impact of hospital closures in sales on communities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. These experiences underscored the critical role of the HPC in monitoring Steward Health Care's bankruptcy and its impact on the healthcare market, emphasizing the urgent need for reform and robust oversight.

As I continue my Master of Public Health (MPH) with a concentration in Healthcare Management, I am committed to applying the insights gained as an HPC Fellow to make hospital operations more equitable, address disparities in access and care quality, and foster inclusive environments that prioritize the needs of underserved populations. These experiences have deepened my commitment to advocating for patient-centered policies and I am eager to carry these lessons forward into the next chapter of my career. I am truly grateful for the support, mentorship, and joy that the HCTI team has shared with me this summer. Thank you, HPC, for providing such an enriching fellowship experience!



CASEY HEELY
She/Her/Hers

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CASEY HEELY

Research and Cost Trends

This summer, I had the privilege of working with the Research and Cost Trends team at the HPC. My project aimed to characterize the out-of-state healthcare users in Massachusetts, with implications for future HPC analyses. For this project, I used and gained familiarity with a case mix database, particularly hospital discharge data. I built upon the STATA and Excel skills I learned during the first two years of my doctorate program when performing the descriptive analyses for the project. I improved my ability to share information effectively with a larger audience via a presentation and to colleagues via a memo. I was also exposed to new ideas and research related to health policy during team meetings.

I learned more about the function of an agency such as the HPC, which aims to inform the legislature and the public about pertinent health policy issues and topics relevant to healthcare delivery in the state. Talking with HPC staff in various departments gave me an appreciation for the breadth of work performed by the different teams at the HPC as well as insight into potential career trajectories. I made valuable connections that I hope to sustain throughout my career in health policy. This fellowship allowed me to learn what a health policy job in the public sector entails, which will be indispensable for informing me of the direction in which I should take my health policy career after completing my dissertation.



HAILEY REED
She/Her/Hers

MPH, Harvard T.H.
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HAILEY REED

Office of the Chief of Staff

I had the privilege of working with the Office of the Chief of Staff this summer, supporting the Deputy Director of External Affairs on government affairs for the agency. As a Health Policy MPH candidate and Massachusetts native, I was interested to learn more about the agency's process for working with other state health agencies and the Legislature in reviewing proposed health care reforms. This summer was especially exciting, as the Legislature was considering multiple health care packages that would have impacted the work of the HPC. In reviewing this legislation, I drafted summaries of proposed bills, provided legislative updates to HPC staff, and tracked proposed amendments and legislative debates.

For my project, I updated a resource that a previous fellow drafted on other state's health care cost growth benchmark policies. I additionally added sections on other cost containment strategies states have implemented that align with the HPC's 2023 Cost Trends Report Policy Recommendations. From this research, I identified key insights on the implementation of other state's cost containment policies that could guide the agency in implementation of future health care reforms in Massachusetts. It was enlightening to learn about how other states address rising health care costs and, in some cases, have innovated beyond the model for a benchmark created here in Massachusetts, implementing policies that Massachusetts has not.

In addition to legislative reviews and my research project, I worked with the Communications Director to create an outreach plan promoting the work of the Office of Patient Protection. I created a master stakeholder contact list for the agency to more easily reference. I attended the June and July Board Meetings, and I met with Commissioners, Advisory Board members, and leaders of other state agencies alongside other fellows. This summer provided me with a multitude of opportunities to learn more about the role not only of the HPC in state health policy but many state agencies and the Legislature. I want to thank my supervisor and all of Team Chief for their support throughout the summer. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to work with such a wonderful team.



**ELIZABETH
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ELIZABETH SIRANOSIAN

Research and Cost Trends

This summer, I had the privilege of working on the Research and Cost Trends (RCT) team at the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC). As a current Master's in Public Health student at UNC Chapel Hill Gillings School of Global Public Health and a past research associate in post-market drug efficacy surveillance, I was grateful to have the opportunity to utilize and expand upon my research skills and use the HPC's wide breadth of data sources to complete my project. The RCT team and the fellowship program in general made a terrific effort at integrating the fellows into their work and culture and valued our questions and insights immediately. I was continuously thankful for the knowledge and guidance of the experts on the team, and enjoyed networking with members on different teams and learning about their projects as well. The fellowship program offered opportunities for networking both with current HPC employees and with advisory board members and commissioners. Some of my favorite meetings included roundtable discussions with board members, where we got to learn about their career trajectory as well as their current work and relationship to HPC.

For my summer project, I worked with HPC's pricing data, specifically facilitating research on price differences within the state's self-insured and GIC plans compared to fully insured plans. To accomplish this, I used the Massachusetts All Payers Claims Database (APCD) and STATA to calculate average costs for common procedures including emergency department (ED) visits, colonoscopies and lab tests, across self-insured, GIC and fully insured plans and specific payers. From this research, I gained an incredible amount of knowledge about how insurance costs are negotiated and regulated, along with practical experience using STATA and best practices for statistical analysis. Additionally, I enjoyed finding ways to best illustrate my data findings and making the results digestible and understandable for an audience.

Having started the fellowship with very limited knowledge on STATA or working with pricing data, I feel accomplished to have been able to produce and share results about pricing differences between insurance types. While further research will need to be conducted to say with confidence the price differences within the state as a whole, my research created a solid foundation that can be built on. Personally, I hope to continue to build upon my STATA learnings and take the skills I gained at HPC with me throughout my career! I am grateful for the opportunity to work at HPC and thankful for the staff and the RCT team and their guidance throughout the entire summer.



ZAKKIYYA WEST
She/Her/Hers

MPH, Boston
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ZAKKIYYA WEST

Office of the Chief of Staff

This summer, I had the privilege of working with the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC), supporting the Deputy Director of External Affairs and the Deputy Executive Director on government affairs and research projects related to behavioral health workforce initiatives. As a Health Policy and Law MPH candidate, I was eager to gain a deeper understanding of HPC's influential role in shaping state health policy, its collaboration with other agencies and the Legislature, and the significance of its work in promoting high-quality, affordable healthcare for all Massachusetts residents.

One of the highlights of my fellowship was the opportunity to meet with key leaders who are playing crucial roles in launching the HPC's new Behavioral Health Workforce Center. These meetings provided invaluable insights into the challenges facing the behavioral health workforce in Massachusetts and the strategies being developed to address them.

A significant portion of my work focused on conducting foundational research for the Behavioral Health Workforce Center. I analyzed the landscape of behavioral health workforce initiatives in other states, examining their study methodologies, data sources, and approaches to obtaining critical information such as licensing requirements and reimbursement rates. This comparative analysis aimed to identify best practices and lessons learned that could inform the HPC's efforts to establish a robust and impactful center in Massachusetts.

Throughout the summer, I was also engaged in various government affairs activities. I drafted high-level summaries of health care related bills, monitored and tracked relevant legislation, and provided timely updates to HPC staff. A particularly exciting moment was attending the Health Equity Compact's Health Equity Trends Summit and preparing a comprehensive recap of the panels for my colleagues. Another memorable project involved creating a master list of special commissions and committees the HPC has been a member of. As my fellowship concluded, I had the chance to begin preparing a presentation on key health care bills for the senior staff meeting.

I am incredibly grateful for the mentorship and support provided by my supervisors and the entire HPC team throughout this fellowship. The skills, knowledge, and relationships I developed will undoubtedly shape my future career in health policy. I look forward to following the HPC's progress in launching the Behavioral Health Workforce Center and its continued efforts to transform healthcare in the Commonwealth.

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