

**Public Employees Benefits Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**

February 1, 2024  
Health Care Authority  
Sue Crystal Rooms A & B  
Olympia, Washington  
9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

The Briefing Book with the complete presentations and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at:

<https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/programs-and-initiatives/public-employees-benefits-board-pebb-program/meetings-and-materials#meeting-materials>

**Members Present in Olympia**

Sue Birch, Chair  
John Comerford  
Harry Bossi  
Kurt Spiegel (departed around 12:00 p.m.)  
Sharon Laing  
Michaela Doelman

**Members Present via Zoom**

Elyette Weinstein  
Tom MacRobert (arrived around 10:30 a.m.)

**Members Absent**

None

**SEB Board Counsel**

Michael Tunick, AAG (in person)

**Call to Order**

**Sue Birch, Chair**, called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Sufficient members were present to allow a quorum. Board members and the public were able to attend either in person or virtually via Zoom.

**Meeting Overview**

**David Iseminger**, Director, Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, provided an overview of the agenda.

### **Equity in Health Care Access and Outcomes Panel Discussion**

**Heather Schultz**, Associate Medical Director for the PEBB Program, facilitated an educational panel discussion regarding equity in health care access and outcomes. Panel participants included Nicole St. Clair, MD, from Regence, Geoffrey Ankeney, MD, from Kaiser Permanente, and Quyen Huynh, DNP, from the Health Care Authority.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Data Collection**

**Missy Yates**, Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator in the Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, gave an update on the work being done in the workgroup focusing on increasing equitable access to health care created from the 2020 bargaining session with the SEBB Program's school employee labor partners. The update included information regarding the data collection strategy, collecting meaningful data, workgroup goals regarding the data, a community engagement strategy, and a tentative timeline.

### **Behavioral Health Network Adequacy Discussion**

**Andrea Philhower**, Fully Insured Team Manager in the Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, provided some insights about behavioral health network adequacy. The presentation included the history of network access standards, the difference between network adequacy and timely access to care, what is included in network access, adequate network access, what happens when a plan can't meet the standards, information on Brennen's law, PEBB Program behavioral health network adequacy requirements, carrier network access insights, and behavioral health services communications to members.

### **Plan Year 2024 Open Enrollment Summary**

**Alisa Richards**, Benefits Accounts Section Manager and Stacy Grof-Tisza, Customer Service Manager in the Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, presented an update on the agency's efforts during, and the results of, the PEBB Program plan year 2024 open enrollment. The summary included benefits accounts information, open enrollment readiness, communications strategy overview, benefits fairs information, customer service open enrollment data insights, and PEBB Program employee and non-Medicare retirees enrollment net changes. Copies of 2024 monthly premiums for employees, non-Medicare retirees, and Medicare retirees was included in the appendix.

### **Benefits 24/7 Update**

**Chatrina Pitsch**, IT Project Manager in the Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) Division, provided some information regarding the Benefits 24/7 application that launch earlier in the year. The update included modernization goals, an overview of the launch of Benefits 24/7, issues reported so far, what changed for subscribers, application self service aspects, improvements for benefits administrators, what stayed the same, benefit administrator training and support, communications regarding the launch, and upcoming additional functionality.

### **Study on Contracting for Administration of UMP**

**Ryan Ramsdell**, UMP Team Manager the Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, gave a debrief on the legislative report regarding the study on contracting for administration of the Uniform Medical Plan. The debrief included information on Uniform Medical Plan operations prior to 2011 and from 2011 to current, information about what the ump third party administration (TPA) currently manages, scaling TPA efforts, returning provider contracting to HCA, returning UMP TPA functions considerations, and important considerations regarding the report. A link to the report was also provided in the presentation as well as a copy in the appendix.

### **Governor's Supplemental Budget and Legislative Update**

**Tanya Deuel**, ERB Finance Manager in the Financial Services Division (FSD) and **Cade Walker**, Policy, Rules, and Compliance Section Manager in the Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, gave an update on the Governor's supplemental budget and legislative session so far. The budget update included fiscal year 2024 supplemental budget funded decision packages in the proposed budget, the 2023-25 funding rate, and information regarding the Medicare Explicit Subsidy. The legislative presentation included information about legislative reports, bill analyses and legislative bill progress for PEBB Program relevant bills, agency requested legislation, and 2024 legislation.

### **Procurement and Benefit Planning Cycles**

**John Partin**, Benefit Strategy and Design Section Manager in the Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, gave a presentation on the procurement and benefit planning cycles for the PEBB Program. The presentation included development of benefit designs, the PEBB Program contracts renewal cycle, and the PEBB Program benefits planning cycle.

### **PEBB Retiree Medicare Benefits Legislative Report Summary and 2025 UMP Plan Option**

**Ellen Wolfhagen**, Retiree Benefits Manager the Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, **Molly Christie**, Fiscal Analyst in the Financial Services Division; and **Luke Dearden**, Clinical Pharmacist from the Clinical Quality and Care Transformation Division collectively presented a summary of the PEBB retiree Medicare benefits legislative report and to also provide some information regarding a UMP retiree plan option for the upcoming year to respond to the plan's rising premiums. The presentation included information about retiree engagement efforts, an overview of the retiree legislative report, PEBB retiree member feedback, information regarding listening sessions, UMP specific feedback, a reference to the analysis regarding the 50 states' government plan offerings, and a state government plan coordination of benefits (COB) comparison. Also included was information regarding financial insights and clinical member impacts. The Board discussed a potential option to transition the UMP Medicare Classic plan's pharmacy coverage to Part D Medicare drug coverage and agreed that the agency should pursue further stakeholder engagement on this option and introduce a resolution at the March Board meeting for consideration. A vote would not be scheduled until the April Board meeting.

## **General Public Comment**

The following members of the public provided comments:

- **Carol Dotlich**
- **Linnea Mulder**
- **Matt Groshong**
- **Fred Yancey**
- **Amy Fortier**
- **Aruna Bhuta**
- **Sharon Etheridge**
- **Toni Long**
- **Diane Rauschenberg**
- **Sue Henrickson**

Topics brought forth during public comments included comments regarding why the PEBB Program would be losing the retiree drug subsidy, appreciation expressed to the agency regarding exploring the potential UMP Classic Part D Medicare drug coverage option; clarifications regarding the potential UMP Part D pharmacy coverage, changes, and communications; and requests for information regarding the relationship of Part D Medicare drug coverage and the Medicare “donut hole”.

Their testimonies can be found in the audio recording for the February 1, 2024 PEB Board retreat at:

<https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/programs-and-initiatives/public-employees-benefits-board-pebb-program/meetings-and-materials#meeting-materials>

## **Next Meeting**

March 21, 2024

Starting time 9:00 a.m.

## **Preview of March 21, 2024 PEB Board Meeting**

**Dave Iseminger**, Director, Employees and Retirees Benefits (ERB) Division, provided an overview of potential agenda topics for the March 21, 2024 meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:37 p.m.