

## Proven Health Care Cost Reduction Through Strength in Numbers

# COALITIONS COALESCING TO THWART STATE REGULATION AND PROTECT ERISA

The critical need to protect ERISA, the 50-year-old federal law governing employee benefit and retirement plans, continues. The hard work and advocacy efforts of the Pacific Health Coalition (PHC) and support by the National Labor Alliance of Health Care Coalitions (NLAHCC), is raising awareness of this issue, and challenging attacks to the law.

Mary Stoll, of the Seattle-based Stoll Law Group, has more than 25 years' experience representing multi-employer and Taft-Hartley ERISA health and welfare plans. She provides legal counsel to the Coalition.

Fred Brown is president of the National Labor Alliance of Health Care Coalitions (NLAHCC) and a former executive director of the PHC. The Pacific Health Coalition is an NLAHCC member.

**Mary:** What we once took for granted—that ERISA preempts state regulation of PBMs (pharmacy benefit managers)—has been in upheaval for several years. Indeed, all 50 states are now considering laws that would allow some state regulation of PBMs.

**Fred:** That's right. For now, the issue is the ability of states to regulate PBMs, but let's be clear, the states won't stop there. Mental health services and pension plans themselves could be next.

**Mary:** The PHC has been face-forward on the legislative efforts to protect ERISA from preemption erosion in Washington, Oregon, and Alaska. We've filed amicus briefs, provided funding, and have lobbied state legislatures. We appreciate the support of the NLAHCC on this issue.



**Fred:** We are steadfast in our desire to protect ERISA from state inroads. NLAHCC is one of many groups—including the PHC—using our combined resources and influence to promote policies, regulations and industry practices that control costs for Taft-Hartley and employer-sponsored health plans, including costs for prescription drug benefits. Examples include the ERISA Purchasers Education Coalition (also an NLAHCC member), the [National Coordinating Committee for Multiemployer Plans](#), and the [National Alliance of Healthcare Purchasers Coalition](#).

The PHC has been a leader in speaking out against proposed legislation. People are realizing that the Pacific Northwest is a thought leader in the health care arena and are looking to groups like the PHC as an adjunct to their own lobbying initiatives, to learn how to lobby more effectively. That should be a source of pride.

**Mary:** I agree! Our member plans are doing a great job of spreading the word about the negative impact of state-by-state regulation of employee benefits, including higher costs and administrative burden for plans and diminished benefit quality. The hard work by the PHC, the NLAHCC, and our member plans is starting to pay off. Recent laws passed in Alaska and Oregon preserve ERISA and do not negatively impact self-insured plans. In Washington state, we will continue to monitor and provide comments during the rules-making process to define the self-insured exception's impact in the Washington law. We encourage all member plans to use the talking points provided on the PHC website when they speak with their elected officials.”

Find the talking points at <https://phcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PHC-ERISA-Preemption-Protection-Talking-Points-11.17.23.pdf>

# ROLE ON NCRX BOARD DELIVERS VALUE TO PHC

by Pat Shier,  
Alaska Member Representative

The Pacific Health Coalition and National CooperativeRx (NCRx) are a natural fit. Both are non-profit, member-led organizations committed to providing the best value in pharmaceutical benefits. Because of the size of the Coalition, when we joined NCRx in 2007, we were granted a permanent NCRx Board position.

A year after I joined PHC in 2018, Fred Brown, then the Coalition's executive director, asked me to succeed him as our representative on the NCRx Board. I took a few years getting to know the ropes, and then volunteered to serve as the Board's secretary/treasurer. My background as an accountant and auditor, including a stint as chief of tax for the Employment Security Division in the Alaska

Department of Labor and Workforce Development, prepared me to provide specific help in this role.

The secretary assures the records of NCRx meetings are gathered, accurate and available to the Board for approval at the next meeting. NCRx staff are proficient in these duties and provide a first-class record of proceedings.

The treasurer is responsible for the Cooperative's day-to-day financial records and serves on the Board's Finance Subcommittee. With the support of staff, including the Executive Director Josh Bindl, the subcommittee reviews the annual budget, reporting, audit processes and other financial issues that may arise. I also review the regular disbursements journal and confirm adequate separation of duties.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the PHC on the NCRx Board, for the great friendships formed with others on the Board, and for the chance to work with Josh. I never fail to learn something valuable from Josh at our annual meetings and training sessions. I also rely on him regularly as the Coalition grapples with pharmacy issues whether on behalf of a PHC/NCRx member or a PHC member that uses a different pharmacy purchasing solution.

From the beginning, it has been very rewarding to serve with such a like-minded group of professionals from different walks of life, all serving a common goal: providing the highest value pharmacy benefit for the health plan dollar. □

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

# RENALOGIC FOR ALL CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE CARE

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) affects more than one in seven adults in the U.S. – 90% of whom are not aware that they have it. That means your health and welfare plan likely covers many people at risk for CKD, which will impact your plan as their disease progresses.

There is no cure for CKD, and as the disease progresses, treatment—dialysis and transplant—gets more demanding for the patient and more costly for health and welfare plans. Dialysis is almost always a top 10 expense for plans and can cost as much as \$500,000 per member, per year according to Tara Metzner, strategic account

- **37 million = the number of people in the U.S. with CKD**
- **560,000 = the number of people in the U.S. on dialysis**
- **\$500,000 = per member, per year dialysis costs**
- **\$18 million = savings by PHC member plans in 2023 using Renalogic**

executive with Renalogic, the [Coalition's provider of dialysis cost-containment services](#).

[Renalogic's suite of services](#) includes uncovering CKD risk among a plan's participants through algorithmic claims analysis (impactIQ); intervening early to slow CKD's progression and improve health (impactCare); making sure people start

dialysis in a planned sequence, not in an emergency setting (impactAdvocate); and containing high claim costs by repricing dialysis services (impactProtect).

“Our suite of services offers plans options to address their specific needs,” said Metzner. “On average, we prevent 98.3% of participants from progressing to dialysis and when dialysis is needed, we can save plans an average of 84.5% off the contracted dialysis rates. For PHC member plans specifically, that savings totaled \$18 million in 2023.”

To learn more, read the [Renalogic product sheet](#) or contact Tara Metzner, [tmetzner@renalogic.com](mailto:tmetzner@renalogic.com) □

# Pacific Health Fair

## 2024 Fall Health Fairs

The Coalition is hard at work making plans for the 2024 Fall Health Fairs! The Health Fairs offer easy access to preventive care health screening tests and flu shots to participating member plan participants and their enrolled, eligible dependents at no cost to them. Participating plans cover the costs for comprehensive lab tests including chemistry/hematology profile (including A1C), thyroid screening, prostate disease screening (PSA), and vitamin D screening. Flu shots are paid 100% by the Pacific Health Coalition.

### ALASKA

#### Fairbanks

Saturday, September 14

Sunday, September 15

\*NEW Fairbanks Pipeline Training Center

3605 Cartwright Ct., Bldg. C  
Fairbanks, AK 99709

#### Anchorage

Saturday, September 21

Sunday, September 22

Dena'ina Center

600 W 7th Avenue

Anchorage, AK 99501

#### Mat-Su

Saturday, September 21

Mat-Su Regional Medical Center

2500 S. Woodworth Loop

Palmer, AK 99645

#### Soldotna

Saturday, October 5

Central Peninsula Hospital

250 Hospital Place

Soldotna, AK 99669

#### Juneau

Saturday, October 5

Sunday, October 6

Centennial Hall

101 Eagan Drive

Juneau, AK 99801

### PACIFIC NORTHWEST

#### Spokane

Saturday, September 21

\*NEW Davenport Grand Hotel

333 West Spokane Falls Boulevard

Spokane, WA 99201

#### Kent

Saturday, September 28

IBEW Local 46 Electrician's Hall

19802 62nd Ave S.

Kent, WA 98032

#### Pasco

Saturday, October 12

Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 598

1328 N Road 28

Pasco, WA 99301

#### Bothell

Saturday, October 19

IUOE Local 302 Union Hall

18701 120th Ave NE

Bothell WA 98011 ☐



## CALENDAR

### 2024 QUARTERLY BUSINESS MEETINGS:

#### August 21, 2024, following the Annual Education Session

UA Local 32 Hall  
Renton, Washington

#### November 20, 2024

Laborers Local 341 Hall,  
Anchorage, Alaska

### COALITION HEALTH FAIRS

#### September – November

Health Fair dates and locations will be posted on [coalitionhealthfair.org](http://coalitionhealthfair.org) beginning August 1.

### INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS PLANS (IFEBP) - 70TH ANNUAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS CONFERENCE

#### November 10-13, 2024

San Diego, California

The PHC/National CooperativeRx Reception – *Time and location to be announced.* ☐

**2024 Health Fairs!**

111 West 16th Avenue, Suite 203  
Anchorage, AK 99501

## READ ABOUT COALITIONS COALESCING TO THWART STATE REGULATION, P. 1.

*Since 1994, the Pacific Health Coalition (aka HCCMCA) has been helping member health plans control health care costs by negotiating better pricing on health benefits and services than these same plans could achieve on their own. Currently, there are more than 50 health plans participating throughout the United States.*

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## The Pacific Health Coalition Programs



The services offered by the Pacific Health Coalition to its member plans are selected, negotiated and designed to achieve the best price and value for labor. For more information on these services, click on the links below, contact [info@phcoalition.org](mailto:info@phcoalition.org) or call 888-474-4226.

- [Annual Health Fairs](#)
- [Coalition Health Centers](#)
- Dental Care (Delta Dental)
- [Dialysis Cost Containment](#) (Renalogic)
- [Disease Management](#) (Optum)
- Joint Claims Administration (Aetna)
- Oncology Care (Transcarent)
- [Pharmacy Benefits Management](#)
- [PPO Contracts](#)
  - Alaska Regional Hospital
  - [Geneva Woods Birthing Center](#)
  - Inpatient and Outpatient Services
  - [Aetna Nationwide Provider Network](#)
  - [Orthopedic PPO](#)
  - [Physical Therapy PPO](#)
- [Surgery Benefit Program](#) (Transcarent)
- Virtual Physical Therapy (Transcarent)
- [Vision Care](#) (VSP)