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The sixth week of the 2018 legislative session convened this week. This was another big week for health care and education bills.

SB18-146—Freestanding Emergency Departments Required Consumer Notices—sponsored by Senators Smallwood and Kefalas, was heard in Senate Health & Human Services on Wednesday. The bill would require Freestanding Emergency Departments (FSEDs) to post notices to consumers about the type of facility, services, and insurances they accept in their facilities. FSEDs have been opening with increased frequency in the Denver metropolitan area since around 2014. They are often confused by consumers as urgent care centers but are different because FSEDs charge emergency room facility fees. Bill sponsors and those advocating for SB18-146 hope the notices outlined in the bill will protect consumers who are not aware of the out-of-pocket and facility fee costs they will encounter when walking into a FSED. The bill passed unanimously out of the committee. It will have its second hearing next week in Senate Finance on Tuesday.

SB18-147—Educator Loan Forgiveness Program—by Senators Zenzinger and Coram, died in Senate Finance this week. The bill would have offered student loan forgiveness to K12 educators who teach in rural areas, with the intent to get more teachers into rural schools. There is currently a nationwide teacher shortage, which has impacted Colorado's rural and urban areas. This bill was part of a number of recommendations to solve the teacher shortage by the Colorado Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education. Senate Republicans in the committee did not support the bill because they argued that there are barriers in our public education system for teachers because they have to get certified to teach in a classroom—and that a bill to address those barriers would have been more impactful to solve the shortage.

In House Health, Insurance and Environment this week, **HB18-1097**—Patient Choice of Pharmacy—by Reps. Danielson and Catlin, passed on a party line vote. This is the third year in a row that this bill has been introduced. The bill would allow those with private insurance to get their prescriptions from any pharmacy of their choice, by forcing pharmacy benefit managers and private insurance companies to accept all pharmacies in Colorado in their network. Opponents of the bill argue that this would increase costs to consumers, because the bill takes away the purchasing power that pharmacy benefit managers possess when they utilize their in-network contracts with pharmacies. Supporters of the bill shared testimony about being unable to fill prescriptions for some patients, or only having the option to use mail-order, because of PBMs. Since only 2% of pharmacies in the state are out of network with private insurance companies, some argued that the stories shared during testimony were probably about Medicaid patients, which the bill does not include. HB18-1097 will most likely pass out of the House, but its fate is uncertain in the Senate.