

IN BRIEF

DCP investigating lottery

The state Department of Consumer Protection is investigating the Connecticut Lottery Corp. for its handling of a series of scandals and the following disciplinary action taken against employees. Commissioner Michelle Seagull said Wednesday the department would open a wide-ranging investigation, as requested by legislators. The lottery has faced several setbacks in recent years, including a botched drawing Jan. 1 that wrongly excluded 100,000 ticket buyers. The mistake cost the state close to \$1 million. The DCP said it would ask the lottery to end all disciplinary actions taken against employees for the Jan. 1 drawing, pending its investigation.

Electrician settles injury lawsuit

A Connecticut electrician who was injured in a fall during construction of a new courthouse has settled a lawsuit against three contractors for \$610,000. The Waterbury Republican-American reported that Matthew Davidson suffered compression fractures in his back when he fell about 20 feet while working on the new Litchfield courthouse in Torrington. Davidson's lawyer said the ladder was the only route from the fourth floor of the building to the fifth, and because it was unsecured it started sliding as Davidson climbed it.

Boston parade route shortened

Boston's mayor said the large amount of snowfall from this week's nor'easter is prompting a change in the St. Patrick's Day Parade route to avoid snow pile up. Mayor Martin Walsh said the shortened route will help with traffic congestion for parade-goers on side streets. Boston experienced blizzard conditions Tuesday with officials estimating nearly 2 feet of snow fell in parts of the state and region. The parade, which brings 1 million people to the city each year, also was shortened last year due to a snowstorm.

Mayoral candidate sent to prison

A New Britain mayoral candidate has been sentenced to prison for an altercation with the current mayor during a children's event. WVIT-TV30 reported that Al Mayo was sentenced to six months in prison following a breach of peace conviction. Prosecutors said Mayo showed up at Mayor Erin Stewart's annual Pencil Hunt in 2015 and began handing out campaign literature to children ages 5 to 13. Mayo grabbed the mayor's arm after she told him to leave, prompting her staff to call police. He is to have no contact with Stewart or her family for two years, but still can campaign for office as long as he's 100 feet away from the mayor.

Director of new state health care office ready to do 'bold' things

By Will Healey

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Victoria Veltri is hard at work getting her house in order, in both the literal and figurative sense of the phrase.

The recently named executive director of the new state Office of Health Strategy, which is charged with developing health policy that improves the health outcomes of residents while also limiting the growth of health care costs, is in the midst of a physical move from her current office on the first floor of the Capitol to a new office just down the street at 450 Capitol Ave.

More importantly, she's also in the midst of organizing the new entity she's overseeing, announced in January by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's office.

The office, which is the consolidation of several existing resources, was established effective Jan. 1, and will be funded through the bipartisan state budget adopted in October.

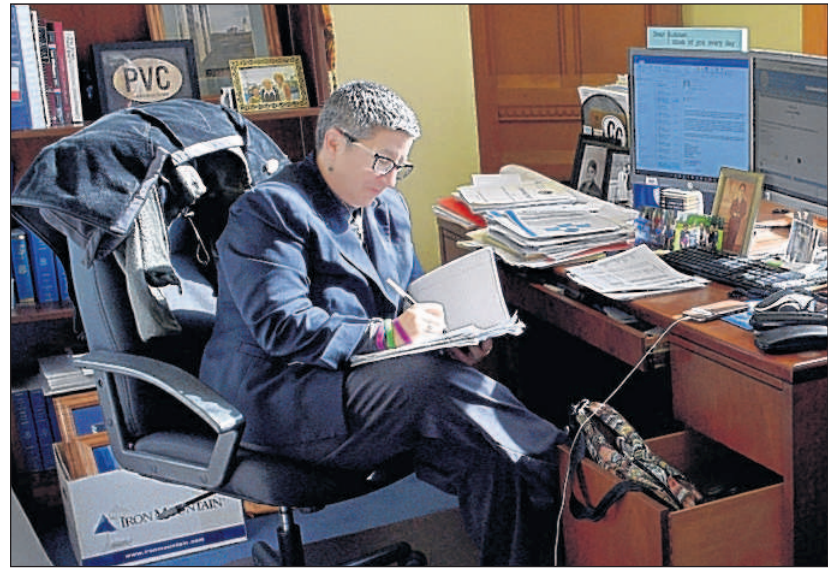
The office's stated mission is to implement "comprehensive, data-driven strategies that promote equal access to high quality health care, control costs, and ensure better health outcomes for the people of Connecticut."

One of the existing resources being folded into the new office is Veltri herself, who has served as the state's chief health policy adviser since June 2016, when the position was newly created.

In that capacity, she reported to Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman and the Health Care Cabinet, a working group chaired by Wyman that was charged with advising Malloy and the Office of Health Reform and Innovation on federal health reform implementation and the development of an integrated health care system for the state.

Prior to her work as chief health policy adviser, Veltri spent five years as the state's health care advocate, where she worked to assist state health care consumers make health care decisions, and improve consumers' access to health care.

Other resources being consolidated into the new office include the State Innovation Model Project



Jim Michaud / Journal Inquirer

Victoria Veltri, recently named executive director of the new state Office of Health Strategy, works in her office at the Capitol in Hartford. The office was established effective Jan. 1 this year, and its mission will focus research and strategies on the advancement of equal access to quality health care.

Management Office, the Health Information Technology Office, the Office of Health Care Access, and the All Payer Claims Database.

Veltri said the new office isn't fully staffed yet, but estimated that it would comprise about 45 people when it's fully operational, spread across three areas — health innovation and strategy, health data and analysis, and health systems planning.

The office, part of the state's executive branch, will be primarily funded by the state, though it also will receive some federal funding. Veltri said the office would get about \$5.75 million from the state this year, which will come from monies the state receives from the insurance industry, as well as funds the state receives from hospitals.

Veltri said the office has many goals, the first one being to bring together the different staffs and "data streams" and to organize the office in a way that achieves synergy.

"I think we're going to get a lot out of bringing these streams together," she said.

Veltri said that so far, she and her colleagues have been in listening mode, engaging with more than 300 people from all aspects of the health care equation — consumers, providers, payers, researchers, and policymakers.

Based on what she's learned so far, she said she views the strategy of the office as two-pronged: to improve the health of residents from a prevention standpoint, and to make a more "accountable" health care system in terms of the value of the dollars being spent on treatment.

"We think that by doing those two things, really attacking prevention and focusing on shifting to value on the treatment side of the equation, we can bring costs down and improve quality," she said. "And we have to."

On the prevention side, Veltri said her office is looking at working with providers and health departments across the state to become accountable for bringing down health care costs in their region by engaging in certain prevention activities.

Director of new state health care office ready to do 'bold' things



Jim Michaud / Journal Inquirer

Victoria Veltri, recently named executive director of the new state Office of Health Strategy, at the Capitol in Hartford.

■ **VELTRI**
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Another goal of the community engagement, Veltri said, is to address health inequities in the state, which, based on certain demographics, can lead to higher incidences of diabetes, asthma, and high blood pressure.

"We need to be down in the communities working with those community organizations to help improve care," she said. "They know their communities the best."

On the treatment side, Veltri said the office is looking at ways to bring down the cost of treatment. One way the office would do that, Veltri said, is by collaborating with health care providers, who are just as interested in improving health care delivery as consumers are. She said providers want to practice more efficiently, improve their workflows, and have more time with the patients

they see, which is a common complaint of consumers.

"We're hearing the same things from patients and providers, just kind of flipped," she said.

A major impediment to that goal is the way the system is set up, in which the business model only "rewards" providers when they do more business.

One way Veltri is looking to attack that problem is by working on primary care and multi-payer payment reform, partnering with primary care providers, insurance companies, and Medicare to move the system away from one based on quantity to one that's based on quality, something that's happening across the United States.

"Unless that shifts, we will continue to see this system that's only driven by quantity," she said.

Veltri said the office also plans to continue analyzing health care data and making that data more transparent and accessible. Ways

the office plans to achieve that goal is by administering the All-Payer Claims Database, which collects consumers' health insurance claims. Veltri also plans to set up a health information exchange to help reduce communication gaps among caregivers, and set up a consumer health information website to help consumers make informed decisions when choosing health plans and providers.

Veltri said the office also would continue to track hospital mergers and acquisitions in the health care marketplace, and look at what impact those arrangements have on the cost and quality of health care in the state.

Veltri admitted the work is hard and the solution to the problem multi-faceted, but said she's encouraged by what she believes the new office can achieve.

Just like Rome wasn't built in a day, the health care system won't change in one, and she said she knows it will take a partnership with "all of the players in the system," with an unerring focus that "it's about the patient."

"You can do this collaboratively, I think you can, and so far we have been, and that's what I'm hoping we'll achieve," she said. "If we don't, costs will continue to rise and quality will not improve and that's the danger of not doing something bold like we're doing."

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