

The Governor's Plan

Gov. Scott has own plans for hospital funding

By [Skyler Swisher](#)

skyler.swisher@news-jrnl.com

Published: Monday, June 1, 2015 at 5:30 a.m.

Last Modified: Sunday, May 31, 2015 at 10:30 p.m.

Gov. Rick Scott has submitted a plan to the federal government that would shift federal money to treat uninsured patients from public, safety-net providers to for-profit hospitals.

The plan has come under fire from the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida, which did an analysis that showed the governor is shifting \$302 million away from public and teaching hospitals while increasing payments to for-profit hospitals by nearly \$100 million.

“We are disappointed to see that his proposal targets safety-net hospitals and could literally put some out of business,” said Tony Carvalho, president of the Safety Net Hospital Alliance. “We are urging the governor and his team to re-evaluate the harmful impacts of this proposed redistribution.”

The state’s largest safety-net and teaching hospitals stand to take massive cuts, according to the Safety Net Hospital Alliance’s analysis. Losses would total \$84.7 million for Jackson Memorial Hospital, \$37.1 million for UF Health Jacksonville, \$36 million for UF Health Gainesville and \$32.6 million for Tampa General Hospital. Halifax Health, the largest safety-net provider in Volusia and Flagler counties, stands to lose \$5.9 million.

The federal government would need to approve the governor’s plan for it to take effect.

As lawmakers return to Tallahassee, Scott’s hospital commission is continuing to dive into the inner-workings of the state’s health care system and plans to tour the state. Stops are planned in Tampa, Jacksonville and Miami.

The nine-member panel’s objective is to make sure taxpayers are getting a good bang for their buck. One of the commission’s findings is that 70 percent of health care in Florida is paid for through a combination of state and federal funding.

“I look at this as no different than anyplace else where we spend taxpayer dollars,” Scott, a former health care executive, told the panel during its first meeting. “We’ve got to get a return on those dollars.”

The commission has requested hospitals turn over information on profitability, executive compensation, average daily cost and other financial information.

Scott has been critical of the hospital industry, saying it is enjoying “record-high profits of \$3.7 billion.”

While some hospitals are doing well, others — particularly those in rural areas and urban areas — are barely breaking even, said Bruce Rueben, president of the Florida Hospital Association.

The hospital industry hasn’t embraced the commission’s role. Most hospitals responded to the commission’s request for information by instructing the state to look it up on their own.

Only one person on the commission — Dr. Jason Rosenberg, a Gainesville plastic surgeon — has a medical background.

Other members include a retired general, a beef consultant and a certified public accountant. The panel is chaired by Carlos Beruff, a Southwest Florida home builder and a contributor to Scott’s gubernatorial campaigns.

The commission meets again Thursday at the Florida State Capitol.

More information is available by visiting healthandhospitalcommission.com.