



## Meeting minutes | Health Care Policy Committee

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 | 9:30 a.m.

202 Arbor Lake Dr., Columbia, SC 29223 | First Floor Conference Room

Minutes approved June 3, 2026

**Board members present for all or a portion of the meeting:** Mr. Steve Heisler, PEBA Board Chairman Joe “Rocky” Pearce, and Committee Chairman Alex Shissias.

**Board members present for all or a portion of the meeting via virtual means:** Mr. John Sowards

**Others present for all or a portion of the meeting:** Lee Allen, Robby Brown, Phyllis Buie, Amber Carter, Justin Ellis, Denise Hunter, Heather Kirby, Heather Muller, Laura Smoak, Rob Tester, Travis Turner, Anthony Unangst, Justin Waites, Justin Werner, and Heather Young from the South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA); Dan Foster and Kwame Haven from CVS Caremark; Mr. Jamie Leeper and Ms. Cyrus Walker from Hello Heart; Jesse Epting and Carmen Wilson from BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina; Richard Lomax from Novo Nordisk; William Hunt from Abbott Diabetes Care; Cam Mullikin from The Mullikin Law Firm; and Sam Griswold from the State Retirees Association of South Carolina.

### I. Call to order

Chairman Alex Shissias called the PEBA Health Care Policy Committee (Committee) meeting to order at 9:30 a.m., and stated that the public meeting notice was posted in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

### II. Approval of meeting minutes – December 4, 2025

Mr. Steve Heisler made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. John Sowards, and passed unanimously, to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2025, Committee meeting as presented.

### III. Successful transition to a new pharmacy benefit manager

It was noted that the Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM) contract with Express Scripts expired at the end of 2025, and a new contract with Caremark began January 1, 2026.

Ms. Laura Smoak, Analytics & Health Initiatives Director, reviewed the complexity of the State Health Plan pharmacy benefits, covering more than 533,000 subscribers and their dependents. Ms. Smoak noted that in 2025, 87.5 percent of members used their pharmacy benefit and approximately 15 million prescriptions are filled each year. There have only been two transition periods within the last 31 years of contracting with a PBM.

Ms. Smoak provided details of the extensive efforts that took place to make this transition a successful one, which included internal and external planning and collaboration, member and employer messaging, comprehensive testing by Caremark, and implementation teams dedicated to a smooth transition.

#### **IV. State Health Plan benchmark review**

Mr. Rob Tester, Insurance Policy Director, presented the State Health Plan (SHP) benchmarking review in which key SHP measures are compared with peer and national benchmarks. Mr. Tester reviewed the SHP enrollment as of March 2026; composite monthly premiums for 2026; the SHP growth and expenditure versus national trends; 2026 SHP member benefits and contributions compared to other State Health Plans in the Southeast; the SHP contribution rate increases versus the Consumer Price Index growth for medical care; and the 2025 average monthly total premiums.

Mr. Tester also reviewed the 2025 average annual deductible; the 2024 median individual in-network deductible amount; and the 2025 average prescription copayment amount. Mr. Tester stated that the State Health Plan continues to compare favorably to other public and private employers, regionally and nationally.

#### **V. Hello Heart Update**

Mr. Jamie Leeper and Ms. Cyrus Walker from Hello Heart reviewed the Hello Heart digital platform focused strictly on heart health in the SHP. Mr. Leeper stated that heart disease is the most prevalent and expensive chronic condition in South Carolina. In 2023, heart disease accounted for 59,399 hospitalizations costing more than \$5.9 billion. More than 12,000 South Carolinians die from heart disease annually.

Ms. Walker stated that the Hello Heart's mission is to help people take control of their heart health using technology and behavioral science. Hello Heart tracks blood pressure, cholesterol, medication, activity, and weight, and can detect irregularities in blood pressure and pulse readings. It also provides personalized digital coaching, and results can be shared with physicians.

Mr. Leeper advised that there are 37,991 SHP members enrolled in the Hello Heart Program. Ms. Walker stated that 81 percent of high-risk users with high blood pressure have reduced their systolic blood pressure, with 70 percent of high-risk users reported results in a better category.

Mr. Leeper and Ms. Walker also reviewed 2025 clinical outcomes, engagement of users, and continued partnership initiatives.

#### **VI. Old business/Director's report**

It was noted that there would not be a Director's Report.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

There being no further business, and upon a motion by Mr. Heisler, which was seconded by PEBA Board Chairman Rocky Pearce, and approved unanimously, the Committee meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.