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TOP
HEALTH CARE LAWYERS 2022

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PRACTICING HEALTH LAW IS MEANINGFUL AND IMPORTANT WORK

BY MARK E. REAGAN

Practicing health law is meaningful, important and fulfilling. Health law and policy is dynamic and ever changing. The health care system is the largest sector of our nation's economy. It touches all of us. Our families. Our friends. Our communities.

America has long struggled with its approach to financing and delivering health care. From the establishment of Social Security in 1935 to the creation of the Medicare and Medicaid programs in 1965 and, ultimately, the enactment of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, the nation has charted its own course. This course has differed from the systems established by our European counterparts and our Canadian neighbors.

Our society still wrestles with the weighty questions as to whether access to health care is a right and how the responsibilities of providing such care should be financed, delivered and organized. Even now, we appear to have not reached a consensus about these significant issues. The only constant in the American health care system is change, and it's not stopping. While much of that change is the inevitable byproduct of demographics and economics, most of it still remains philosophical.

Health care lawyers touch virtually all parts of this system as it continues to reinvent itself. Many of us, like me, represent health care providers delivering care, such as hospitals, physician groups, nursing facilities and the caregivers working within these organizations. Others represent health plans, insurers and other payers, which

provide the means for care to be delivered. Some of us represent government policymakers and agencies involved in appropriating health care funding, paying for care or overseeing provider/payer compliance and quality. Others represent consumers seeking to hold providers, payers and government to greater levels of accountability. Finally, some of us represent caregivers seeking to impact the system through union organizing and collective bargaining.

Collectively, health lawyers are at the forefront of the continuing transformation of American health care. It is vital work.

I consciously chose health law at the start of my career and have never questioned that choice. Having now practiced more than thirty years, I have had the tremendous opportunity to develop my practice to focus on representing organizations serving elders and dependent adults. Doing this work has been important to me because it has made a difference in the lives of others who deserve care and dignity during their twilight years. Serving as managing shareholder of a firm that only represents health care clients has reinforced the meaningful nature of our work in fostering a sustainable system that preserves and enhances access to health care.

The transformational nature of health law offers junior attorneys the opportunity to become experts in emerging areas and develop consequential practices. For the same reason, health lawyers must continuously evolve



their practices throughout their careers. It demands that you stay at the cutting edge.

The experience in representing health care providers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been both humbling and a great honor. It again reinforced my belief as to the significance of our work. Stretched to its brink, the health care system proved to be fragile. But between the will of caregivers committed to the well-being of their patients and the priorities of many committed policymakers, it survived. Only to transform again.

I am proud to be a health lawyer. For those of us doing this work, we do not likely change the world in a single day. However, whether it comes from a single project or the collective efforts over any number of years, this work is far more likely to leave an indelible mark on the system. This is what makes what we do meaningful, important and fulfilling and likely explains why the best health lawyers are in such high demand.

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