

Modern Healthcare

A case study in government participation



Dr. Jeff Bailet

Dr. Jeff Bailet, CEO of San Francisco-based Altais, got his start in government relations when he was the chief medical officer of a medical group in Seattle. After the practice announced it would move to a different health system, the city's deputy mayor asked him to help address fears among the public and community clinics that the change would make it more difficult for the city's neediest populations to access care. Those outreach efforts culminated in an agreement that secured healthcare access for those communities for 10 years.

"That was my sort of first taste of how powerful advocacy can be," Bailet said. "I realized early on that the medical community can't do it alone. It's a team sport."

Bailet continued to stay involved in advocacy and government relations in the coming years, allowing him to develop relationships with local, state and federal leaders. His service in state medical societies eventually led him to serve in national organizations like the American Medical Association and American Medical Group Association.

The reputation Bailet built during his decades of healthcare experience and advocacy eventually led to a phone call from then-Congressman Paul Ryan, a Wisconsin Republican. Ryan asked Bailet whether he would serve on the fledgling Physician-focused Payment Model Technical Advisory Committee, an advisory panel Congress created under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 to improve how Medicare pays physicians for the care they provide to the program's beneficiaries.

Bailet was excited about the opportunity and immediately began to pitch Ryan on his qualifications. "He cut me right off and said, 'Jeff, I'm calling you. You don't have to sell me,'" Bailet said. Ryan sent a letter endorsing him for the job.

After Bailet was appointed to PTAC, HHS' Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation called him out of the blue to ask whether he would be interested in leading the committee. He

wasn't ready for the conversation and was sure his candidacy would die on the vine because he had never chaired a committee like it before. He gave them his best pitch. "I thought I'd never hear from them again," Bailet said.

But he was wrong. About two weeks later, the assistant secretary called back.

"We have our fingers crossed that you'll agree to be the chair," a voice on the other end of the phone said.

Bailet quickly accepted the position and is now heading into his sixth and final year as PTAC's chair. He said there's a clear need for healthcare executives and subject-matter experts to be more involved in the policymaking process.

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