



ADVOCATES FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH



ACH MONTHLY UPDATE: FEBRUARY 2023

www.advocatesforcommunityhealth.org

Dear ACH Members:

As you already know, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) and long-time health center champion attended our Annual Member Meeting earlier this month. In a moving speech, he applauded the impact federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) make in the underserved communities where they provide critical primary care, and vowed that [expanding the Health Center Program would be one of his major initiatives](#) in the committee this year. We're excited that he's quickly elevating our FQHCs by holding a hearing on Thursday, March 2, which will impact all FQHCs nationwide. ACH CEO Amanda Pears Kelly will be providing testimony during the HELP Committee's hearing titled, "Community Health Centers: Saving Lives, Saving Money." In her testimony, she will make the case that increasing investment in community health centers is the best investment you can make in health care - delivering cost savings, patient health, and community well-being. You can livestream the hearing [here](#).

Continue reading for additional updates on our activities in Washington and relevant policy news.



POLICY UPDATES

ACH-Specific Legislation Updates

Health Equity

Legislation: On February 21, ACH participated in a press conference to celebrate the introduction of the **Health Center Community Transformation Hub Act, HR 1072**, with the bill's sponsor **Representative Yvette Clarke (D-NY)**. The event took place at Morris Heights Health Center and included key leadership of ACH members Morris Heights Health Center and Sun River Health, as well as other important members of the community. HR 1072 was introduced with seven original cosponsors. We look forward to continuing to grow the bill's Congressional support and work with Congresswoman Clarke to advance it. Read our event recap blog post [here](#).

Administration: ACH is continuing to work with the CMS Office of Minority Health on a potential health equity data pilot.

FQHC Workforce

Legislation: ACH is continuing to work with Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA) on the "Developing the Community Health Workforce Act," legislation to help CHCs retain, train, and attract the workforce they need to serve their patients. We are currently approaching potential Republicans who could partner with Dr. Ruiz to lead this bill and hope to have the legislation introduced by the end of March 2023.

On February 16, the Senate HELP Committee held a hearing titled, "Examining Health Care Workforce Shortages: Where Do We Go From Here?" Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-VT) in his remarks specifically cited the benefits of community health centers and the Teaching Health Centers program, and witnesses and members of the Committee discussed health care workforce shortages and possible solutions. You can watch a recording of the hearing [here](#) and ACH's submitted written comments for the record can be found [here](#).

Emergency Preparedness

Legislation: ACH is continuing to work with Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragan (D-CA) on the "Emergency Preparedness for Underserved Populations Act," legislation to authorize awards to support emergency preparedness at community health centers. We have approached Rep. John Joyce (R-PA) as a potential lead Republican cosponsor, although conversations are still ongoing. We hope to introduce this legislation by the end of April 2023. Potential vehicles for this legislation include the reauthorization of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA), which needs to be reauthorized by September 30, 2023.

Updates on ACH Priorities

340B

ACH is continuing conversations with key stakeholders and members of Congress about the [340C Proposal](#), to ensure protections for this important funding stream for community health centers.

Additionally, the 340B working group is reviewing a memo based on 340B claims modifiers. CMS released draft [guidance](#) on how CMS will calculate the rebates for Part D drugs. In this guidance, they specifically ask for "Options for methods to identify 340B units to exclude them from Part D rebatable drug units beginning in 2026." ACH will prepare a comment.

Lastly, in response to requests from HRSA and Congressional staff, ACH is interested in pursuing a new data initiative on 340B revenue and savings.

CHC Invest

ACH is continuing conversations with key members of Congress and their staff about the upcoming Community Health Center Trust Fund reauthorization and the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations process, urging robust, sustained funding for community health centers. In the House, Representatives Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), John Joyce (R-PA), and Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) are leading the CHC Fund reauthorization negotiations, along with leadership of the Energy and Commerce Committee. In the Senate, the HELP Committee, led by Chair Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Ranking Member Bill Cassidy (R-LA), has jurisdiction over this reauthorization and will lead this process. The Community Health Center Trust Fund authorization runs through September 30, 2023.

Recently, the nation's [first report card on primary care](#) was released and the data supports our call for investment in FQHC's—the country's largest primary care network. We will be layering this evidence into our CHC Invest talking points and campaign content to further drive home our messaging to policymakers.

Value-Based Care

CMMI: ACH members met with CMMI staff on February 17. We continue conversations for how to integrate FQHCs into existing and upcoming primary care models. We advocated for claims data, explicit guidance of patient attribution and provider overlap rules, and behavioral health integration. We continue these discussions on multiple fronts, especially as the agency is establishing a Universal Foundation of Quality Metrics.

Payment Models: CMS plans to develop and test three new payment models that aim to boost access to expensive cell and gene therapies, increase access and adherence to widely used generic drugs, and incentivize completion of clinical trials for drugs approved under FDA's accelerated approval pathway. The effort, part of the agency's response to President Biden's October executive order directing CMS to explore payment models that may further drive down prescription drug costs.

Innovation

Innovation Center: According to a new report issued by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, HHS and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) should create a new innovation center tasked with promulgating best practices for health systems across the United States. The effort to boost health outcomes should be modeled after the CMS Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) and the Cancer Moonshot effort.

The Latest News From DC

President Biden addressed the public today in Virginia Beach and focused his remarks on concerns around health care budget cuts. Biden pointed to GOP proposals to repeal the Affordable Care Act and cut funding to Medicaid, two programs that nearly 1 in 4 Virginians rely on for coverage. This speech comes just a little over a week before he is set to present his fiscal 2024 budget to Congress.

The newly revealed FACT SHEET: The Congressional Republican Agenda: Repealing the Affordable Care Act and Slashing Medicaid can be viewed [here](#). You can get the latest information regarding his speech by clicking [here](#).

Additionally, during President Biden's annual State of the Union address to Congress, he focused on the need for bipartisan cooperation to preserve and protect democracy. Some specific policy initiatives announced alongside the State of the Union that could impact FQHCs include:

- *Support for the mental health of the health workforce.*
- *Improve school-based mental health.*
- *Strengthen parity by proposing rules to ensure that insurance plans are not imposing inequitable barriers to care, and mental health providers are being paid by health plans on par with other health care professionals.*
- *Expand access to telehealth by tripling resources dedicated to promoting interstate license reciprocity for delivery of mental health services across state lines.*
- *Recruit diverse candidates to the mental health profession: HHS will increase funding to recruit future mental health professionals from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and to expand the Minority Fellowship Program.*
- *Expanding access to evidence-based prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery.*

ACH looks forward to working with the Administration as they implement these priorities to ensure FQHCs have access to the resources they need to continue to provide high quality, comprehensive care to their communities.

Congressional Committee Updates

Senate Appropriations Committee: Top Senate appropriators announced committee assignments for the 118th Congress, including chairs and ranking members for the 12 subcommittees. Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) and Ranking Republican Susan Collins (R-ME) outlined the full roster. The Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee will be led by Chair Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV). The Agriculture-FDA subcommittee will be chaired by Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Ranking Republican John Hoeven (R-ND).

Administration

CMS:

Surprise Billing: CMS told all parties involved in dispute resolution under the Surprise Billing Act to put their payment determinations on hold following a Texas court ruling. A federal judge ruled in favor of the Texas Medical Association in a challenge against the Biden administration and certain components of the surprise billing rule. That resolution process has been bogged down with backlogs and has received far more disputes than expected.

Must-Read Articles

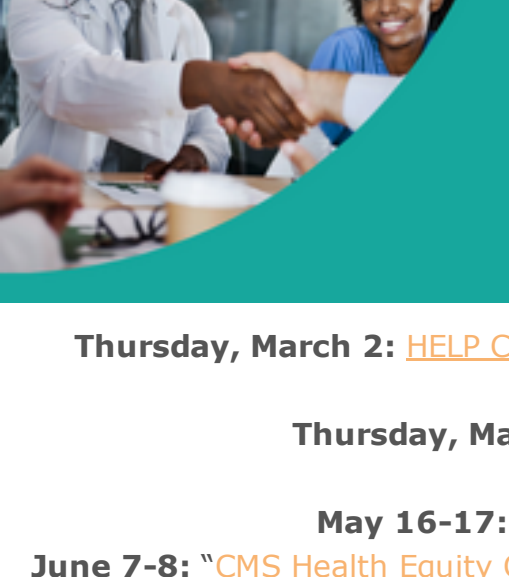
[Adding Social Determinants to CMS' Universal Foundation a Key Step Forward](#)

[A Disappointing Report Card for Primary Care](#)

[10 Things to Know About the Unwinding of the Medicaid Continuous Enrollment Provision](#)

[Closing the Primary Care Gap](#)

[FACT SHEET: The Congressional Republican Agenda: Repealing the Affordable Care Act and Slashing Medicaid](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, March 2: [HELP Committee's Hearing titled, "Community Health Centers: Saving Lives, Saving Money."](#)

Thursday, March 16: [Behavioral Health Business Value Conference, Washington, D.C.](#)

May 16-17: Save the Date: ACH Fly-In (more details to come)

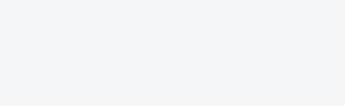
June 7-8: ["CMS Health Equity Conference"](#), Inaugural event. Registration and Call for Proposals to open soon. *Washington, D.C. and Virtual.*

July 23-26: [ACU's 2023 Conference, Elevating Care, Clinicians, & Communities](#) Washington, D.C.

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