



ADVOCATES FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH



ACH MONTHLY UPDATE: JULY 2023

www.advocatesforcommunityhealth.org

Dear ACH Members:

During the past year, Advocates for Community Health (ACH) has been working non-stop to elevate the urgent needs of community health centers and the 30 million patients they serve every year. As we celebrate our second anniversary, we thank you for your support and trust during this unprecedented time. [Click here](#) to read our anniversary blog post highlighting some of our latest milestones.

As we prepare for National Health Center Week, over 1,4000 community health centers nationwide are facing one of the most challenging times in the more than 50-year history of the Community Health Center Program. Given the urgency to reauthorize the Community Health Center Trust Fund by September 30, we encourage you to reach out to your members of Congress while they are home. Our [August Recess Toolkit](#) has numerous resources for you to take advantage of during this month.

Lastly, we are excited to share we received more than 20 proposals for the Community Health Entrepreneur Challenge, which will award five ACH members \$500,000 each! The Selection Committee is now in the process of reviewing proposal submissions, and we hope to notify applicants on the outcome of their submission by the end of August. In the meantime, if you have any questions about this or our two peer learning collaboratives, please email Liezl Perez Schewe by [clicking here](#).

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



MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Staff Update

Please help us welcome our new director of policy & government affairs, Molly Grady. Molly brings several years of health policy expertise to her role and we are thrilled to have her supporting our efforts in Washington. We look forward to officially introducing her during our next [Office Hours](#) on Wednesday, August 23.



ADVOCATES FOR
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HEALTH

WELCOME TO OUR TEAM



Molly Grady

Director of Policy & Government Affairs

Virtual Information Session

Given the growth of interest in ACH membership, we recently hosted a general information session for health center leaders across the network. If you know someone who could not join us and might be interested in learning more about ACH, please share our [webinar recording link](#).



POLICY UPDATES

ACH-Specific Legislation Updates

Health Equity

ACH continues to promote the [Health Center Community Transformation Hub Act](#), HR 1072, on the Hill, including continuing conversations with Rep. John Curtis (R-UT) as a potential lead Republican sponsor.

FQHC Workforce

We continue to work toward bipartisan introduction of the Developing the Community Health Workforce Act, to be sponsored by Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA). We are currently approaching potential Republican lead sponsors and hope to have the legislation introduced soon. We are also working to ensure that workforce needs are incorporated into discussions on the Community Health Center Trust Fund reauthorization. As a reminder, ACH recommends \$950 million in FY24 for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC). We also support the Restoring America's Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act, S. 862, a three-year reauthorization for the NHSC that would double the mandatory funding from \$310 million to \$625 million in FY24 and increasing to \$825 million in FY26. For the Teaching Health Centers Program, ACH recommends an investment of \$5 billion over ten years.

Emergency Preparedness

ACH continues to work with Rep. Nanette Barragan (D-CA) on the Emergency Preparedness for Underserved Populations Act. This legislation would create a fund that will help health centers prepare for the next pandemic, natural disaster, or other emergency. We are also working to identify a Republican lead sponsor.

Updates on ACH Priorities

CHC Invest

It has been an eventful time as Congress continues conversations about the reauthorization of the Community Health Center Trust Fund. In the Senate, the HELP Committee is still negotiating their reauthorization. HELP Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-VT) is working with Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS) on a potential bipartisan proposal, while HELP Committee Ranking Member Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA) has introduced a reauthorization bill that mirrors the House proposal – a 2-year reauthorization allocating \$4.2 billion per year, a 5% increase. ACH remains laser focused on our goal of achieving a

significant increase through the trust fund reauthorization, above the House level. ACH will continue strategic conversations throughout August with members of the Senate as the HELP Committee continues deliberating, and ultimately the House and Senate will have to negotiate a final funding level. We may see an extension to give negotiators more time, beyond the September 30 deadline.

As for the appropriations process for discretionary spending, the community health center program has been flat funded in both the House and the Senate, at \$1.86 billion for fiscal year 2024. The path ahead for these bills is murky, and we fully expect to see Congress either enact a continuing resolution to give them more time to negotiate or, if they cannot agree on terms by September 30, we may see a government shutdown. [More information on our CHC Invest campaign and all we are doing to urge Congress to increase funding for health centers can be found here.](#)

340B/C

340B/C: ACH, with significant input from our 340B Working Group, submitted a [letter](#) responding to the bipartisan [Senate 340B Working Group's RFI](#), which sought feedback on ways to improve the 340B program. In addition, on July 24, ACH sent a [stakeholder letter](#) to the HELP and Energy and Commerce Committees outlining the challenges health centers are facing in the 340B program and recommending [340C as a solution](#) that included signatures from 104 national, state, and local organizations representing 25 states as well as DC and Puerto Rico.

Value-Based Care

The VBC working group met recently and kicked off its FY2024 agenda. More information will be provided in next week's biweekly update. The CMS Innovation Center held a FQHC focused webinar on July 20. Links are available here: [Slides \(PDF\)](#) | [Transcript \(PDF\)](#) | [Recording \(MP4\)](#).

The Latest News From DC

Welcome to August, where Congress is officially in recess. The Senate and House will return September 5 and September 12 respectively, leaving little time to finalize federal spending for fiscal year 2024 and reauthorize community health center funding, National Health Service Corps funding, the Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA), the farm bill, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Authorization before the September 30 deadline. We expect Congress to exact extensions for all of these matters, but how that will work out remains to be seen.

Before adjourning, the Senate Appropriations Committee completed its full slate of 12 appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) discretionary funding allocations. Meanwhile, the House delayed full committee consideration of several appropriations bills until after the August recess. Neither group has held a floor vote on any appropriations bill.

For Labor-HHS, which has jurisdiction over community health centers, cuts are in store for several health care programs because of inflation and the debt-ceiling deal. That is the takeaway from the Labor-HHS-Education FY2024 spending bill the Senate Appropriations Committee advanced. The committee will have to reconcile the bill with the House GOP's substantial proposed budget cuts and elimination of some agencies. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) funding would stay in line with 2023 levels, well below inflation, and some health agencies would also see cuts because of flat funding. The community health center program is among the programs flat funded, as mentioned above. Appropriations Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) lamented restrictions on funding levels set in the debt-ceiling deal in May but noted that senators have agreed to give the Labor-HHS package \$2 billion in additional emergency funding.

In addition, Democrats' efforts to reauthorize the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) are floundering in the face of GOP opposition. A bid by Foreign Relations Chair Bob Menendez (D-NJ) to amend the NDAA on the Senate floor this week to reauthorize PEPFAR for five years failed when

Republican members objected. Meanwhile, House Republicans confirmed that they will not put forward any reauthorization of the \$7.5 billion program that fights AIDS and HIV, the virus that causes it, in more than 50 countries throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. Republicans say the Biden administration has “hijacked” it to fund groups that provide and counsel patients on abortion. Instead, GOP lawmakers want to use a one-year patch tucked into their Foreign Operations spending bill that keeps the decades-old program operating and includes language restoring a Trump administration rule blocking funding to any groups that discuss or financially support other organizations that provide abortions.

Must-Read Articles

[Health Centers Face Funding Deadline](#)

[Insurers Deny Medical Care for the Poor at High Rates](#)

[Without Bipartisan Agreement, Cassidy Introduces Health Reauthorization Bill](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

August 6-12: National Health Center Week

August 8: [HRSA 2022 Uniform Data System \(UDS\) Trends Webinar](#), 1:00 p.m. ET. *Virtual*

August 23: [ACH Monthly Office Hours](#). 12:00 p.m. ET. *Virtual*.

August 23: [CMS Partner Education Monthly Series on the Unwinding](#). 12:00 p.m. ET. *Virtual*.

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1575 I ST NW, SUITE 300,
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

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