



ADVOCATES FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH



ACH MONTHLY UPDATE: SEPTEMBER 2023

www.advocatesforcommunityhealth.org

Dear ACH Members:

Thank you to those of you who joined us for our ACH Member Policy & Advocacy Update Webinar earlier this week. If you were unable to attend, you can click [here](#) to view the recording. *Please note, this video recording is internal and should not be shared with anyone outside of our membership.* As the September 30 deadline quickly approaches and our community health centers face unprecedented budgetary challenges, please know that the ACH team is available to answer any questions you may have.

In addition, we are excited to share the [registration page](#) for our 2024 Annual Member Meeting, which will take place March 5-7, 2024. Next year's event will be hosted at the brand new Capitol Hill Royal Sonesta. Please take advantage of our early bird registration fees and register today. You can also book your hotel room at a discounted rate [here](#).

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



POLICY UPDATES

The Latest News From DC

[The Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act, S. 2840](#) recently passed the Senate HELP Committee by a vote of 14-7, with 3 Republicans joining the Democrats in supporting – Senators Rogers Marshall (R-KS), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and Mike Braun (R-IN).

We are deeply grateful to the bill's sponsors, HELP Committee Chair Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS), for their vision and commitment to enacting a substantial increase for health center funding and we will urge Congress to quickly move this bill forward. ACH is also happy to see funding levels in this legislation near the levels we have advocated for in our [CHC Invest](#) campaign. ACH's bold vision, strategy, and persistent advocacy produces results. [See here for ACH's letter of support.](#)

A brief summary:

The Community Health Center Trust Fund would be reauthorized at \$5.8 billion annually for the next three years. Health centers would also receive \$3 billion to build new facilities or renovate existing ones, with projects to expand dental and mental health care prioritized. CHCs would have to provide nutrition services, and an amendment added would require centers to also provide behavioral health services.

The Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education program would be reauthorized at \$300 million per year through FY2028, totaling \$1.5 billion. This will facilitate an additional 700 primary care residency slots. An amendment added in markup would increase the THC-GME per-resident amount by \$10,000 per year each year from 2024-2028.

The National Health Service Corps would be reauthorized at \$950 million per year through 2026. That would support about 20,000 loan repayment awards and more than 2,000 scholarships for providers working in underserved areas.

The legislation also provides funding to support new and existing grants and programs dedicated to expanding, recruiting, and retaining the primary care workforce.

Government Shutdown Update:

It is becoming [increasingly unlikely](#) that Congress will be able to agree upon and pass a continuing resolution to continue funding for the federal government by September 30, when the fiscal year ends and federal funding runs out. This is due to numerous disagreements, most notably around overall funding levels, funding for Ukraine, and funding for border security. So, we expect the federal government to shutdown starting October 1, and it is unclear how long it will last.

ACH remains gravely concerned that this ongoing instability and uncertainty is an unnecessary threat to the patients who rely on health centers for their care. Procedurally, HRSA can insulate health centers for a short time from the immediate financial impact of a shutdown, but will be operating with a reduced staff, so answers to questions and requests could be delayed. Health centers already operate within thin margins, and the overlapping impact of the Medicaid redetermination, a continuing workforce crisis, and increasing need in the communities they serve makes this situation all the more concerning. For your reference, HHS's recently released contingency plan can be [found here](#). We will continue to keep you updated as negotiations around government funding continue.

ACH-Specific Legislation Updates

Health Equity

The ACH Health Equity Working Group held its kick-off meeting earlier this month to evaluate [ACH's policy priorities](#) and discuss advancing existing and future legislation.

ACH continues to promote Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-NY)'s [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. In the coming weeks, we will be reaching out to Republican members on the House Energy and Commerce Committee to encourage bipartisan co-sponsorships and build support behind the bill.

Additionally, ACH joined the National Minority Quality Forum (NMQF), the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA), and 16 other organizations to launch the [Data Equity Coalition](#). This new partnership aims to improve health outcomes through better, more accurate and more representative data on race, ethnicity and language (REL) and sexual orientation and gender identification (SOGI). Read the full press release [here](#).

FQHC Workforce

We continue to work toward the 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, and are very encouraged to see one of our proposals mirrored in the Senate HELP Committee's Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act ([Section 212 - Allied Health Professionals](#)). ACH has also recommended \$950 million in FY24 for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), and this funding level was also included in the Senate HELP bill ([Section 103 National Health Service Corps](#)).

We also support the Restoring America's Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act, S. 862, a three-year reauthorization introduced by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) for the NHSC that would double the mandatory funding from \$310 million to \$625 million in FY24 and increase to \$825 million in FY26. For the Teaching Health Centers Program, ACH recommends an investment of \$5 billion over 10 years.

Emergency Preparedness

ACH continues to work with Rep. Nanette Barragan (D-CA) on the Emergency Preparedness for Underserved Populations Act, legislation to create a fund that will help health centers prepare for the next pandemic, natural disaster, or other emergency, and is working to identify a Republican lead sponsor. As a reminder, ACH provided [feedback](#) to the [Health Care Preparedness and Response Capabilities](#) guidance.

Updates on ACH Priorities

CHC Invest

On September 8, the House Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Education and Workforce Committees introduced the bipartisan [Lower Costs, More Transparency Act](#), tying together multiple pieces of legislation focused on health care affordability. **This legislation funds the CHC Trust Fund at \$4.4 billion per year through calendar year 2025 (a 10% increase over current levels).** While the bill was expected to be considered by the House in mid-September, the vote was postponed and is expected to be considered at a later date. We are encouraged to see ACH's advocacy efforts come to fruition in this bipartisan commitment to investing in a critical part of our nation's health care safety net. ACH's statement in support of the Lower Costs, More Transparency Act can be [found here](#).

340B/C

ACH continues to advocate urgently for policies to address the actions that are chipping away at the 340B program, as the current reach of community health centers would not be possible without it. The 340B program allows community health centers to stretch scarce federal dollars and provide vital services that otherwise would be difficult to fund. Unfortunately, health centers' ability to access and leverage this vital program is eroding. The 340B program savings are diminishing over time due to the actions of state policymakers, pharmaceutical companies, and pharmacy benefit managers, to the detriment of the nation's safety net providers.

ACH is actively engaged in conversations on Capitol Hill and with the Administration on how best to protect the 340B program for health centers. ACH recently submitted comments in response to a Request for Information issued by the Senate 340B Working Group, and those comments can be [found here](#). A support letter from more than 100 stakeholders for ACH's [340C proposal](#) can be [found here](#). More information about our 340B policy principles and priorities can be [found here](#).

Value-Based Care

The ACH Value-Based Care (VBC) Working Group continues to meet regularly and the ACH VBC Learning Collaborative is currently underway. ACH also meets regularly with CMMI and relays member feedback on current and potential future CMMI models to the Innovation Center. Our Value Based Care Working Group Chair is also leading work to finalize a Value Based Care survey to send to all ACH members that will gather input on ACH's VBC priorities and how we can best help members incorporate VBC into their work. Additionally, ACH met with the Duke Margolis Center for Health Policy's new working group to develop strategies for pursuing VBC in the Medicaid program.

Reminder: CMMI's Making Care Primary (MCP) model [Request for Applications](#) is available, and applications will be open until November 30. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Kristen Constantine at kconstantine@cha-dc.com.

Monthly Member Highlights

[CBHA Receives Grant to Help Youth Access Mental Health Care](#)

[Cherokee Health Launches "Breast Pump Depot" to Make Breastfeeding More Accessible](#)

Must-Read Articles

[ACH and UnitedHealthcare Announce Multi-Million Dollar Investment in Community Health Center Innovation Initiatives](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

October 25: [ACH Office Hours](#), 12 p.m. ET (Virtual)

November 29: [Emerging Issues Webinar on Medicaid Redetermination](#), 12 p.m. ET (Virtual)

March 5-7, 2024: [ACH Annual Member Meeting](#) (Washington, DC)

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