



ADVOCATES FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH



ACH MONTHLY UPDATE: JUNE 2023

www.advocatesforcommunityhealth.org

Dear ACH Members:

Please save the date for our 2024 Annual Member Meeting, which will take place March 5-7! Next year's event will be hosted at the brand new Capitol Hill Royal Sonesta. Stay tuned for the link to make your hotel reservations later this summer.

Additionally, please join us in celebrating our three newest board members: Christy Bracewell Trotter ([Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic](#)), Mari Millet ([Morris Heights Health Center](#)), and Tory Starr ([Open Door Community Health Centers](#)). Each of our new board members brings a wealth of experience and valuable insight to strengthen our organization's mission-driven work. We are grateful to have them leading ACH's mission-driven work. We are deeply grateful for the leadership that Anne Kauffman Nolon (Sun River Health), Paulo Soares (Camarena Health), and David B. Vliet (LifeLong Medical Care) have provided during their terms on the board of directors, and we are thrilled to continue working with them as they transition onto ACH's Executive Policy Advisory Council (EPAC).

As August Recess is fast-approaching, we encourage you to join our members-only webinar "[Leverage August Congressional Recess to Drive Health Center Advocacy](#)." It will take place on Wednesday, July 12 at noon ET. This is an ideal time for health centers to get quality time with their Members of Congress while

they're at home in their states and districts. With so many time-sensitive issues facing health centers, the August Congressional Recess is a crucial time to engage your representatives in Congress while they are home in their districts and advocate for health center priorities, specifically health center funding and 340C. Register [here](#).

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



MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Second Anniversary

We are celebrating our second anniversary on Friday, July 21. You can support our celebratory campaign by having a member from your team answer the following questions in no more than two sentences:

Why was it important for your organization to join ACH? How does being a member of ACH contribute to your work? Check out our [ACH YouTube playlist](#) for some sample answers.

Once you select the team member from your health center that will participate, please have them [email](#) their answer to us by **Thursday, July 13 COB**. These answers will be used in social media graphics that we will use in our social media campaign and also provided to you for use on your owned channels. If you have any questions, please [contact](#) ACH Communications, Marketing & Membership Manager Rita Rey.

Virtual Information Session

Given the growth of interest in ACH membership, we are hosting a general information session on **Monday, July 31 for health center leaders across the network**. During this event, our team will be available to answer all questions regarding our policy priorities and work plan during the upcoming months to secure funding for our health centers. The registration link can be found [here](#) and we will be adding additional details in the coming days. Please share this event with any health center leaders who would be a good addition to our ACH membership ranks.

UHC Collaboration Opportunities

We recently launched two initiatives that are part of our multi-year collaboration with UnitedHealthcare – the [Community Health Entrepreneur Challenge](#), a \$500,000 grant opportunity exclusively available to five ACH members, and [Leadership Peer Learning Collaboratives](#) targeted to value-based care and health center operations. Proposals for the Community Health Entrepreneur Challenge are due on July 14 and ACH members can apply to join a Learning Collaborative by July 21.

As you are completing your proposals for the Community Health Entrepreneur Challenge, you can check out our [blog post](#) for some of the most frequently asked questions.



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.

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 are working to identify a Republican lead sponsor.

HHS is updating the Health Care Preparedness and Response Capabilities to reflect insights learned from recent disasters, and ACH has submitted comments with our feedback. You can find these comments [here](#).

Additionally, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing: "Legislative Solutions to Bolster Preparedness and Response for All Hazards and Public Health Security Threats." This hearing was an opportunity for members to discuss legislation that could be rolled into the Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA) reauthorization, which must be completed by September 30. More information can be found [here](#).

ACH has submitted comments to both the [House](#) and the [Senate](#) Committees on emergency preparedness issues that are important to health centers that we'd like to see considered as part of PAHPA. The Senate HELP Committee held a [hearing](#) on the PAHPA reauthorization on May 4, although timing for further consideration of this bill in both the House and Senate remains unclear.

Innovation

On June 13, the House Education and the Workforce Committee [advanced legislation](#) to permanently allow employers to offer telehealth as a tax-free benefit separate from their group health insurance plans. While telehealth is a bipartisan issue, some members would rather employers offer comprehensive health insurance that includes telehealth instead. More information on this bill can be [found here](#).

On June 16, Senators Brian Schatz (D-HI), Roger Wicker (R-MS) and others reintroduced the Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act of 2023 ([bill; summary](#)). The bill would remove barriers to telehealth coverage such as removing the 6-month in-person visit requirement for telemental health visits and permanently allows FQHCs to serve as distant site providers. The new version of CONNECT would fix telehealth for RHCs and FQHCs by changing the definition of an encounter and correcting payment issues. ACH is currently reviewing the legislation. Axios has some good coverage on where things stand in Congress with telehealth [here](#).

Updates on ACH Priorities

340B/C

On June 16, Sens. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), John Thune (R-SD), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Jerry Moran (R-KS), and Ben Cardin (D-MD), all members of the Senate 340B bipartisan working group, sent a [letter](#) to stakeholders seeking feedback on ways to improve the 340B program. Specifically, the senators are seeking input on bipartisan policy solutions that would provide stability and appropriate transparency to ensure the 340B program can continue to achieve its original intent of supporting entities serving eligible patients. ACH will submit comments on this RFI, including information on our 340C proposal. Comments are due July 28, 2023.

ACH continues to discuss and solicit feedback on the 340C proposal with interested stakeholders and members of Congress and key staff. **ACH is circulating a [letter for stakeholder sign on, encouraging Congress to protect the 340B program for community health centers and offering our 340C proposal as a legislative solution](#). [Click here for more information or to sign on](#).** Deadline for signatures is on Wednesday, July 14.

CHC Invest

Following the enactment of the Fiscal Responsibility Act (the debt ceiling and spending caps agreement), the FY24 appropriations process is picking up speed. Allocation levels for the House and Senate appropriations subcommittees were released and approved and markups of appropriations bills should continue throughout June and July.

While the specific funding levels for CHCs have not yet been released, we anticipate that we could see the House funding level for community health centers be level with last year (if not a decrease), given the House Republicans' commitment to lessening federal spending, but we are continuing to advocate for an increase given the need and that the committees do have some discretion on what the levels will be. Prospects for an increase in discretionary funding for CHCs are marginally higher in the Senate than the House, but how that all plays out remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, the Community Health Center Trust Fund reauthorization discussions continue, with the House expected to pass its bipartisan reauthorization bill in July and Senate HELP Committee negotiations ongoing. As you recall, [Senator Sanders recently announced a bold initiative](#) to allocate \$130 billion to community health centers and another \$60 billion for CHC workforce, but we do not think the Senate version of the CHC Fund Reauthorization will be anywhere close to that level. ACH has continued its productive conversations with Committee staff on both sides of the aisle as we advocate for

an increase in this mandatory funding. [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.](#)

Value-Based Care

The CMS Innovation Center announced the new 10.5 year long Making Care Primary (MCP) Model aimed to improve primary care for underserved populations in eight states. ACH released a statement applauding the initiative. ACH has provided feedback for how to incorporate FQHCs into VBC models with special focus on behavioral health and health equity initiatives. The Working Group compiled model questions, and ACH discussed these questions with CMS. The Innovation Center will host a FQHC-focused webinar on the model later this summer.

If interested in MCP, CMS encourages applicants to submit a voluntary, non-binding letter of intent (LOI) at [this link](#), which will remain open until November 2023. The application will be available later this summer. Webinar slides and the recording will be available [here](#) shortly. If you have questions about the model, please contact Kristen Constantine at kconstantine@cha-dc.com

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The Latest News From DC

The House and Senate are currently in recess for the July 4th holiday, coming back into session on Monday, July 10. They will then be in session for a busy three weeks before breaking for the month of August.

In July, we anticipate the House will consider the bipartisan community health center trust fund reauthorization package (included in the [PATIENT Act, HR 3561](#)) on the House floor, which funds health centers at \$4.2 billion over two years, a five percent increase. The Senate HELP Committee is still engaged in conversations around the trust fund and has not released a bill yet. As a reminder, the fund must be reauthorized by September 30.

In addition, the Senate could advance a package related to insulin affordability and other drug pricing issues in July. The appropriations process will also continue in July, but it remains to be seen if the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittees (which have jurisdiction over health centers) will release their respective proposed funding levels for CHCs in the near future, or if those will come out after the August recess.

Meanwhile, it's been a year since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. President Biden's new [Executive Order to Strengthen Access to Contraception](#) includes actions that will increase contraception access, guidance, and resources for community health centers. This and other hot topics lay ahead of the 2024 elections.

Must-Read Articles

[Collaboration to improve workforce equity highlighted at CMS Health Equity Conference](#)

[Medicaid Unwinding: Why Retroactive Coverage is not the Answer to Procedural Disenrollments as Some Claim](#)

[Underfunded and Overburdened: The Toll of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Community Health Centers](#)

[\\$65 Million to Strengthen Hurricane Response and Emergency Preparedness at Health Centers](#)

Monthly Member Highlights

[Tampa Family Health Centers](#)

[Legacy Community Health](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

July 12: [Leveraging August Congressional Recess to Drive Health Center Advocacy, Virtual, ACH Members Only](#)

July 14: Community Health Entrepreneur Challenge Deadline

July 21: Learning Collaborative Deadline

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

July 26: [ACH Office Hours](#)

July 31: [Virtual Information Session](#)

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