



ADVOCATES FOR
COMMUNITY
HEALTH

Dear ACH Member,

Happy Wednesday! The [WNBA playoffs](#) are in full swing, and the [baseball postseason](#) starts next week, but the biggest competition of the year will be at the ballot boxes in November. The one thing we know for sure is that the work by and on behalf of health centers will remain crucial no matter how the election shakes out.

Please continue reading for important member information and legislative updates below.

Save the Date: ACH's 4th Annual Member Meeting (AMM) will be held in Washington, D.C., at the Royal Sonesta Dupont Circle Hotel from **March 25 - 27, 2025**. Additional details will be shared here as they become available.

On Tuesday, October 8th at noon ET, please join us for a members-only webinar, "[Behavioral Health Opportunities and Challenges for FQHCs and CCBHCs.](#)" This session will feature speakers from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Swope Health (an ACH Member and dually Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic and FQHC) who will discuss the pros and cons of FQHCs becoming CCBHCs. [Register here](#) to join this important conversation!

***Last Call for 340B Information from Members*:** How do you use 340B program savings dollars at your health center? As we continue to look for ways to illustrate how vital the savings from the 340B program are for health centers, patients, and communities, we are calling on ACH members to provide your stories. As you know, health centers account for only **5%** of savings from the 340B program. **As advocates, it's our job to highlight to Congress how**

vital this 5% is to the financial stability of health centers. Therefore, we are asking you to provide us with information, stories, and/or data on what services you can provide thanks to funding provided by 340B program savings. This information can be submitted in any format you find easiest: bullet points, excel sheets, or a quick paragraph. **Please submit feedback or questions to [Sandy Applebee](#), AVP of Communications & Marketing by October 4, 2024.** We plan to use these qualitative stories and data points in future collateral on and off the Hill.

The Latest News from D.C.

In their final legislative action before the election, the House and Senate approved a three-month [continuing resolution \(CR\)](#) to prevent a government shutdown and fund the government through December 20th. [Once again, Speaker Johnson relied heavily on Democratic support from the minority chamber as the bill passed the House 341-82.](#) All 82 "no" votes came from Republicans, and 209 Democrats voted "yes". Punchbowl News summarizes the contents of the CR [here](#).

The government funding battle, however, is not over. In fact, the December 20th funding deadline sets the stage for a contentious post-election pre-holiday lame-duck period. [While Speaker Johnson has assured his Republican members that he would not approve an omnibus spending deal](#) in December, his tenure as Speaker would indicate otherwise. The House GOP is already fractured, leading us to believe that he will again need to work with Democrats in the House and Senate to keep the lights on in Washington so Congress can leave town before the holidays.

In election news, we are only 39 days from the November general election. We have seen [polls in battleground states and nationally continue to tighten and widen](#), but as any former campaigner knows, polls don't vote; people do. So, while there are plenty of tea leaves to read and crystal balls to consult, ACH continues to engage with campaigns and elected officials on both sides of the aisle to prepare for whatever outcome we might see in November.

The [vice presidential debate](#) between Senator J.D. Vance (R-OH) and Governor Tim Walz (D-MN) is scheduled for October 1, 2024. As a reminder, ACH has created resources comparing the healthcare legislative priorities and insights of the nominated Democratic and Republican presidential tickets. [This resource](#) is available exclusively for ACH members and can be accessed via our [Members-Only portal](#). This side-by-side comparison includes policy issues like maternal health, reproductive rights, drug pricing, Medicare, Medicaid, workforce, and more.

Updates on ACH Priorities and Legislation

CHC Invest

- **Funding Letter:** Last week ACH delivered [a letter](#) to Congressional leaders and key staff urging Congress to reauthorize the Community Health Center Fund in an end-of-year funding package with sustained, long-term funding. [The letter](#), signed by more than 550 healthcare organizations representing all 50 U.S. states and territories, specifically requested a minimum of \$5.8 billion per year for at least three years. [You can find ACH's press release on the letter here](#). The letter was reposted 326 times by national and state media outlets. It was also covered by [Inside Health Policy](#), received a mention in [Politico Pulse](#), and was also picked up by the Associated Press, and Yahoo Finance: [Over 550 Health Care Organizations Partner with Advocates for Community Health to Urge Increase in Community Health Center Funding as Deadline Nears \(yahoo.com\)](#).
- **THANK YOU** to everyone who signed up and helped us gather signatures! This letter will serve as an invaluable tool for advocating for sustained, long-term funding for the CHC Fund, showing the breadth of support for CHC funding.

340B/C

- **SUSTAIN 340B Act:** The Gang of Six's *SUSTAIN 340B Act* remains delayed due to alleged disagreements between the Democrat and Republican offices. We heard that the group is meeting with HRSA last week to discuss a new draft, but as far as we have heard, the six offices have yet to come to an agreement regarding introduction of the bill.
- **340B PATIENTS Act:** On September 11, Senator Peter Welch (D-VT) introduced the [Senate's version](#) of the [House 340B PATIENTS Act](#). ACH endorsed the bill, [thanking Senator Welch](#) for sponsoring this legislation codifying the use of the contract pharmacies to dispense 340B discounted drugs. [See the Senator's press release here](#), with comments from ACH's CEO Amanda Pears Kelly and Bi-State Primary Care Association's Tess Kuenning.
 - [ACH issued a statement](#) picked up by national media, including Inside Health Policy and Bloomberg Government, applauding HRSA's strong and clear statement that the rebate model is inconsistent with the 340B program and will take enforcement action against companies that pursue one.
 - ACH is urging members of the House to sign on to a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) being circulated by Reps. Spanberger (D-VA), Johnson (R-SD), Matsui (D-CA), Mann (R-KS), Dingell (D-MI), and Wittman (R-VA) which express concern about Johnson and Johnson's efforts to "upend over 30 years of federal law by transitioning two 340B drugs....from direct discounts to a rebate model for Disproportionate Share Hospitals (DSH)." ACH has officially endorsed the letter, which currently has 144 cosigners.
 - **Rebate Model:** On September 17, HRSA issued a letter to Johnson and Johnson that threatened civil monetary penalties and cutting access to the Medicaid and Medicare Part B markets if it didn't immediately end its proposal to convert specific 340B discounts to a rebate model.

Value-Based Care

- ACH CEO Amanda Pears Kelly is a panelist today at the [ACO Leadership Summit](#) in Boston where she is discussing funding for social determinants of health and health

equity. Each year, this forum brings together senior-level executives from both public and private health insurance plans, ACOs, integrated hospital systems, independent physician groups, and solution providers to discuss strategies and solutions to shape the future of value-based care delivery and contracting.

- As a reminder, [ACH compiled an extensive list of VBC materials and resources exclusively for our members](#). Please enter the password: *ACHMember* to access this resource in your Members-Only Portal. We hope you find this helpful; we look forward to continuing to expand our role and influence in creating value-based care arrangements that benefit health centers and patients they serve.

Health Equity

- Earlier this month, the [Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's 2024 Annual Legislative Conference](#) was held in Washington, D.C. ACH was proud to join with the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved and others to sponsor “Empowering Black Fathers to be Allies for Black Maternal Health.”
 - The discussion included many essential ways we can improve Black maternal health outcomes, including federal, state, and local policy changes, breaking down institutional racism in healthcare settings through education, advocacy, and financial implications, as well as the importance of Black fathers’ mental, physical, and emotional health being considered as a critical role in their partners’ pregnancy, labor, and delivery experience.
- ***ACTION ITEM*** ACH has launched a [new grassroots initiative](#) to re-engage with Members of Congress on [H.R. 1072, the Health Center Community Transformation Hub Act](#), introduced by Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-NY). The bill will require re-introduction next Congress, so ACH is working to build more robust support on the Hill now. Thank you in advance for your efforts, and please let us know if you have any questions!

FQHC Workforce

- The ACH-led [Developing the Community Health Workforce Act](#), soon to be introduced by Congressman Raul Ruiz (D-CA), has been finalized by the House's Legislative Counsel, and we are actively working to find a Republican co-sponsor. We have lots of leads, but please contact Molly Grady at mgrady@advocatesforcommunityhealth.org if you have a Republican office you are close with that you think might be interested in working with us on this bill.
- Last week, the ACH Workforce Working Group met and discussed several areas of interest, including potential policy solutions for states that do not allow same-day billing for behavioral health visits, behavioral health workforce policies to include in Rep. Troy Carter's office (D-LA) 2025 reintroduction of the [Mental Health Workforce Act](#), and what areas of the workforce are health centers experiencing the most acute issues and shortages.
- On September 17th, ACH CEO Amanda Pears Kelly participated in a roundtable discussion with leaders from the Department of Health and Human Services about workforce initiatives in health care. Attendees included CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, HRSA Administrator Carole Johnson, and representatives from leading healthcare advocacy organizations.

Other News from Across the Federal Government

The White House

- **AIDS Summit:** This week, the White House Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP) [convened a summit to raise awareness and accelerate the nation's HIV response in Hispanic and Latino communities](#). The summit included leaders across the federal government, civic and social organizations, the private sector, healthcare professionals, and other communities nationwide.

- **Women's Health:** First Lady Jill Biden announced this week that the Defense Department will commit [\\$500 million annually toward women's health research](#). The investment will fund research on conditions that disproportionately affect women, including ovarian cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic fatigue, and musculoskeletal injuries.

Congress

- **House Energy & Congress Committee:** On September 17, the full Committee convened a [markup of 16 bills](#), including the Telehealth Modernization Act of 2024, which, among other provisions, provides payment parity for FQHCs and RHCs in telehealth. All health-related bills were passed by roll call out of committee, and several were [passed by the House on Monday](#), although the Telehealth Modernization Act still has not been addressed by the full House. Advocates for Community Health have joined the National Association of Rural Health Centers in a joint letter to Congress to advocate for telehealth payment parity.
- **House Ways & Means Committee:** On September 18, the House W&M Subcommittee on Health convened a hearing entitled, "[Investing in a Healthier America: Chronic Disease Prevention and Treatment](#)." The hearing explored ways to improve chronic disease and treatment, particularly regarding the role of access to nutritious food.
 - On September 24, the Senate hosted a hearing entitled "[Why is Novo Nordisk Charging Americans with Diabetes and Obesity Outrageously High Prices for Ozempic and Wegovy?](#)" The hearing came about after CEOs of generic drug companies told the Senate HELP Committee Chair Bernie Sanders (I-VT) that they could manufacture and sell generic versions of Ozempic and Wegovy for less than \$100 monthly and still make a profit.
 - Initially scheduled for September 26, the Senate HELP Committee has postponed a [markup of several bills](#), including the [Medical Graduate Investment Act](#). This legislation authorizes a new grant program for minority-serving

institutions and HBCUs to increase enrollment and ultimately increase the diversity of the primary care workforce. It was included in the original version of the Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act but not in the final version voted out of committee.

- **Seward Health:** Senate HELP Committee: Last week, the HELP Committee [voted 20-0 to hold Steward Health's CEO in contempt of Congress](#) for failing to comply with the subpoena to testify before the Committee. [Yesterday, the full Senate agreed to the contempt charges](#) after Chairman Sanders (I-VT) and Ranking Member Cassidy (R-LA) asked for unanimous consent.
- **Senate Finance Committee:** On September 17, the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing entitled ["Lower Health Care Costs for Americans: Understanding the Benefits of the Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\)."](#) During the hearing, members debated the benefits and drawbacks of the IRA's impact on health care and the value of extending tax provisions in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
- **Legislation of Interest:**
 - **CBO Data Access Act:** On Monday, the House passed [H.R.7184, the CBO Data Access Act](#), which authorizes agencies to disclose records in their systems to the CBO without requiring prior written consent. The effort aims to improve the quality and accuracy of CBO models to estimate the budget impacts of legislative proposals by allowing more efficient access to data.
 - **Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act:** This week, the House passed [H.R. 5526, the Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act](#), which amends the physician self-referral law to permit Medicare patients to receive prescription drugs via caregivers or mail.
 - **Prompt Approval of Safe Generic Drugs Act:** Last week, Rep. Nanette Barragan (D-CA) [introduced the Prompt Approval of Safe Generic Drugs Act](#).

The bill aims to expand access to lower-cost generic drugs by removing hurdles in the approval process.

Health Resources and Services Administration

- **Mental Health and SUD Integration:** This week, [HRSA announced \\$240 million in awards to launch and expand mental health and substance use disorder services in primary care](#). Congratulations to the 400+ community health centers nationwide, *especially the 12 ACH members* who received this historic award!
- **Rural Health Care:** On September 24, [HRSA announced nearly \\$75 million](#) to strengthen health care in rural communities. Specifically, these funds will launch new opioid treatment and recovery services in rural communities, strengthen maternal health in the South, and help rural hospitals stay open.
- **Workforce:** Last week, [HRSA announced a \\$100 million investment](#) to expand the number of nurses and primary care physicians and increase behavioral health support by growing the community-based workforce.
- **New Access Points (NPA) Applications Deadline Extension:** For those who applied to Grants.gov for NAP funding, [resources are now available to complete Phase 2](#) of your application. *The deadline has been extended to Wednesday, October 2.* For additional application resources, please see [HRSA's NAP technical assistance webpage](#).

Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services

- **Medicaid Unwinding:** According to the [KFF tracker](#), as of September 12, more than 25 million Medicaid enrollees have been disenrolled. Of those, 69% (56.4 million) have since renewed their coverage.
- **Women's Health Grant:** On September 20, [CMS launched an innovative grant program to provide close to \\$9 million in 14 states](#) to improve coverage of and access to women's health benefits. This funding is part of [CMS' Maternity Care](#)

[Action Plan](#) strategic approach to build on the [Biden-Harris Maternal Health Blueprint](#).

National Institutes of Health

- **Primary Care Research Network:** The National Institutes of Health (NIH) made awards to three institutions - Oregon Health and Science University, University of Wisconsin at Madison, and West Virginia University - as a first step toward creating a primary care clinical research network that will actively engage communities historically underrepresented in clinical research. This marks the kick-off of the pilot phase of the Communities Advancing Research Equity for Health™ - or [CARE for Health™](#) program, which seeks to improve access to clinical research that informs medical care. These awards, totaling more than \$5 million in funding for the first year, will support three Network Research Hubs to develop the program's initial infrastructure. For more details on the program and the individual awards, visit the CARE for Health™ [Funded Research Page](#). To receive updates, join the CARE for Health™ program [listserv](#).
- **ARPA-H Community Health Centers Research:** The Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) [announced a new initiative to increase government research funding through a new Emerging Health Innovators \(EHI\) initiative](#). One of the tracks is a community-centered innovation track that invites community innovators, including community health centers, to develop technology that addresses specific community needs. ARPA-H is [surveying early-career researchers and community organizations](#) to learn more about prospective applicants' needs, challenges, and concerns. [The survey](#) deadline is October 25th, and we encourage our members to complete it to amplify the voice of health centers in this funding opportunity.

Federal Trade Commission

- **PBM Insulin Lawsuit:** [The FTC is suing the three largest pharmacy benefit managers](#), Caremark (CVS), Express Scripts (Cigna), and Optum RX (UnitedHealth), alleging they block cheaper insulin options from insurance plans in favor of versions with higher manufacturer rebates.

Food and Drug Administration

- **At-Home Flu Vaccines:** Last week, [the FDA approved FluMist, a nasal spray flu vaccine](#), that will be available online with a prescription starting next year. The maker of FluMist, AstraZeneca, will provide the vaccine through a third-party online pharmacy, making it the first-ever at-home flu vaccine.

ICYMI

- [The U.S. Will Let More People Take Methadone At Home](#), AP News
- [When Your Doctor's Visit Comes With a Hospital Fee. But No Hospital.](#) NC Health News
- [As Francine Bears Down on New Orleans, A Health Center Braces for Impact - and Plans for Uncertainty](#), Direct Relief
- [Bipartisan Effort Paves Way for Reviving Shuttered Hospitals in Georgia](#), KFF Health News

Upcoming Events of Interest

- **October 8:** ACH Emerging Issues Series: [“Behavioral Health Opportunities and Challenges for FQHCs and CCBHCs.”](#) *Virtual*
- **October 30:** [ACH Members-Only Policy Office Hours](#) 12:00 - 1:00 PM (EST), *Virtual*
- **December 2-4:** [Third Annual Social Determinants of Health Policy Forum](#), *Washington, D.C.*
- **March 25-27, 2025:** [ACH 4th Annual Member Meeting](#), *Washington, D.C.*

Please let us know if you have any questions, and have a great rest of your week!

Sincerely,

Your ACH Policy & Government Affairs Team

[Stephanie Krenrich](#), SVP, Policy & Government Affairs

[Molly Grady](#), Director, Policy & Government Affairs



ADVOCATES FOR
COMMUNITY
HEALTH

Advocates for Community Health, 1575 I St. NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)