

Allies for Independence Washington Insights

Week of April 24, 2023

CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

On Wednesday, the House passed the Limit, Save, and Grow Act of 2023, which would lift the debt limit into 2024 and includes over \$4.8 trillion in spending cuts over the next decade. This is a significant accomplishment for Speaker McCarthy, who has at times struggled to unite the House GOP. House Republicans worked overnight into Wednesday to clear major hurdles with the bill, namely, to secure the support of key Midwestern Republicans. The bill achieves these savings largely by restricting social spending programs, such as Medicaid and SNAP, preventing student debt cancellation, and eliminating various Inflation Reduction Act credits and tax incentives.

Swift passage in the House strengthens their negotiating position with the White House, which has so far refused to negotiate on lifting the debt limit, as they contend lifting the debt limit should not be and has not been a bargaining chip. It is unclear how Congress will resolve this looming crisis, although one potential outlet for both sides would be to enter into negotiations on the broader FY24 budget, which would inevitably address the debt limit.

However, there are several challenges with negotiating the debt limit and the FY24 budget together. The debt limit crisis is expected to come to a head as early as June, whereas the FY24 budget does not need to be enacted until October 1st. House Republicans also just voted on lifting the debt limit until about April 2024, setting up another debt limit crisis in an election year when the economy is going to be a significant political issue. There are also significant discrepancies between the House and Senate as it relates to FY24 appropriations, since House Republicans banned congressionally-directed spending (“earmarks”) requests for the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education package.

With the risks of cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, and a greater economic crisis, stakeholders are on edge until both sides can agree on a path forward to resolving this impasse.

Please reach out if you have any questions.

ON THE RADAR

Medicaid Work Requirements: What Does the House GOP Proposal Mean for You?

As noted above, the Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023 would impose work requirements on certain Medicaid beneficiaries. Specifically, the proposal would require states to establish community engagement requirements as a condition of eligibility for able-bodied adults ages 19 to 55 without dependents. Community engagement is defined as participating in employment, job-training, or performing community services for at least 80 hours per month. Under the proposal, states would lose federal Medicaid funding for this population if they fail to meet the 80 hours requirement for three or more months during a calendar year.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates federal spending would decrease by \$109 billion over the next decade, as CBO estimates 15 million people could be subject to the community engagement requirements. That said, CBO expects about 1.5 million adults, on average, would lose federal funding for their Medicaid coverage. Most early analysis estimates this number would be higher, as it is difficult for states to administer new requirements and challenging for beneficiaries to satisfy bureaucratic hurdles that come with maintaining eligibility.

It is a deeply troubling proposal, in addition to manufacturing a debt limit crisis to secure such restrictions, and if passed would jeopardize federal Medicaid funding for millions of beneficiaries.

We will continue to watch this space closely and encourage you to reach out with questions.

Health Care Workforce in Focus of Congressional Committees

The Senate HELP Committee and the House Energy & Commerce Committee are both working to reauthorize key health workforce programs, and potentially consider new proposals to strengthen the pipeline for other health workers beyond physicians, dentists, and nurses. With several programs up for reauthorization this year, including the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program, Congress is positioned to address workforce shortages at a critical moment.

We will know soon how bold both committees will be in considering workforce proposals, as proposals to strengthen the pipeline for direct care workers have thus far not garnered bipartisan support. Expect both committees to move to consider these bills in the next few months, as deadlines for certain health programs is September 30, 2023.

Key Members Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Promote Home-Based Care

A bipartisan bill from Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE) and Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI) would shift more health care to the home setting and away from hospitals and other health facilities. Specifically, this bill would create a new Medicare benefit, allowing certain beneficiaries not eligible for Medicaid to have a home health worker up to 12 hours a week. The legislation would also provide grants to organizations to strengthen the workforce, which could be incorporated into broader Congressional efforts to strengthen the health workforce. The bill is in line with Rep. Dingell's work to expand access to home and community-based services and compliments similar legislation to grow the direct care workforce. The legislation has a broad coalition of support from insurers, tech companies, and other provider

organizations, making it a notable bipartisan effort. For more information on the bill, [please click here](#).

Biden Administration Proposes Two Medicaid Rules

On Thursday, the Biden Administration unveiled two long awaited notices of proposed rulemaking (NPRMs). The Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services and the Managed Care Access, Finance, and Quality rules are designed to strengthen access to and quality of care across Medicaid and CHIP. If finalized, the rules would establish national standards for access to care in both managed care and fee-for-service arrangements. It would also boost transparency for Medicaid payment rates for providers, including rates and compensation for direct care workers.

We will be following up with more detailed summaries next month and look forward to your questions or comments on the rules. For more information on these rules, please [click here](#).

Ownership Data for All Medicare-Certified Hospice and Home Health Agencies Publicly Available

Last week, the Biden-Harris Administration announced HHS is releasing ownership data for all Medicare-certified hospice and home health agencies. This means that you can view information on more than 6,000 hospices and 11,000 home health agencies on CMS' website. The available information covers nearly every aspect of ownership, including:

- National Provider Identifier (NPI).
- CMS Certification Number (CCN).
- Detailed information about each owner; and,
- Data on merges, acquisitions, consolidations, and changes of ownership since 2016.

You can read more about the announcement and available information by [clicking here](#).

New Grants to Build Partnerships Between Vocational Rehab, Education, and Centers for Independent Living

The Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Agency (RSA) is providing grants to state vocational rehabilitation agencies and state educational agencies to provide grants focused on building partnerships between systems that support disabled youth as they transition from school to adult life. The program is called the Pathways to Partnerships Innovative Model Demonstration Project and its goals are to increase opportunities for competitive integrated employment and improve independent living outcomes. RSA hopes to award between 22 and 32 5-year grants. The application closes June 5, 2023.

More information is available [here](#).

ISSUE OF THE WEEK: Biden-Harris Administration Release **Long-Term Care Executive Order**

Last week, President Biden issued an Executive Order (EO) focused on strengthening the long-term care workforce. The order, titled, "Increasing Access to High Quality Care and Supporting Caregivers," would direct federal agencies to improve access to long-term care by identifying existing federal programs to promote access and address workforce shortages. This EO is an acknowledgement of the difficult

landscape for long-term care and the challenges in providing care for the last several years. Throughout the pandemic, turnover rates were exceptionally high for direct care workers despite demand for HCBS, with over 700,000 people nationwide on waitlists. These challenges impact patients the most, and families who often step in as caregivers due to cost and access issues.

Through the EO, President Biden directed HHS to explore ways to increase compensation and benefits for long-term care professionals providing federally funded services. The EO also directs HHS to address worker conditions and job quality, to prevent burnout and reduce turnover, and improve access to mental health support. The EO also highlights the need to expand training pathways and professional learning opportunities to improve the quality of care and attract new providers into the care workforce. The EO also directs HHS to consider testing for a new innovative payment model that includes family caregiver supports, such as respite care.

This is an important step in strengthening the infrastructure for long-term services and supports and greater recognition for the need to address access issues with long-term care.

You can view the Executive Order by [clicking here](#).

SIGN-ON LETTERS

Allies for Independence signed on to the following letters recently:

- Families USA letter to Congressional Leadership: No Medicaid Cuts
- Group Letter to HHS Secretary Becerra: Medicaid Unwinding
- CCD & DAC Letter to Congress on Medicaid Cuts

ON THE HORIZON

ICDR Webinar on COVID-19 Recession Impact on Individuals with Disabilities in Rural Communities

On May 17, 2023, the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) is hosting a webinar on employment outcomes for people with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are interested in registering, please [click here](#).

Registration is Now Open for the 2023 Social Engagement Virtual Summit.

The 3rd Annual Social Engagement Virtual Summit will take place on May 9 and May 10th from 1-4pm. This year's summit will focus on social engagement of older adults and people with disabilities in rural communities and their family caregivers.

For more information and to register, [click here](#).

6th Annual Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day Symposium Coming Up!

On May 11, 2023, the Biden Administration and the National Council on Aging (NCOA) will hold the 6th annual Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day Symposium. Public health practitioners, professionals

in the aging network, mental health providers, health care professionals, and anyone interested in ensuring the mental health of older adults should save the date and plan to attend this virtual event.

Be on the lookout for additional registration information in the coming weeks and learn more from NCOA!

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is June 15th!

During the week of June 15, 2023, The Administration for Community Living will be sharing resources, hosting discussions, and promoting awareness about elder abuse around the themes of:

- Interdisciplinary partnerships
- Intergenerational collaboration
- Intervention & prevention
- Intersectionality of elder abuse
- International elder justice efforts

To find out more information please [click here](#).

RECOMMENDED READS

- *Kaiser Family Foundation* – [Ending the Public Health Emergency for Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services](#)
- *Health Affairs* – [The Home Care Workforce Has Not Kept Pace With Growth In Home and Community-Based Services](#)
- *The Washington Post* – [GOP eyes new work requirements for millions on Medicaid, food stamps](#)

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