

Allies for Independence Washington Insights

Week of March 13, 2023

CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

The full release of the President’s FY24 budget kicked off this week, signally the official start of the appropriations season. While the House is out of session this week, the Senate is in town and actively reviewing the FY24 budget, including a rare and high-profile hearing at the Senate Budget Committee. The most notable item in President Biden’s budget is the \$150B investment in HCBS, which we cover in greater detail below. What comes next is most interesting, but it may not play out for several weeks or until House Republicans unveil their FY24 spending plans.

On Wednesday, HHS released a list of the initial Medicare Part B prescription drugs that will have lower coinsurance payments starting in April due to provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act. This change applies to prescription drugs whose prices rose faster than the rate of inflation in 2022, and means some beneficiaries will see out-of-pocket spending decrease by up to \$390 per average dose. This is a welcome development and is only the beginning of the Administration’s work to reduce costs for high-cost drugs.

While the budget and appropriations cycle creates opportunities for stakeholders to highlight a variety of issues, Congress has a lot on its plate at the moment. The banking crisis is only in its early stages and Congress is expected to take an active role in mitigating the issue from snowballing further. There is also the Ohio train derailment issue, which will continue to occupy the Administration’s time as the fiscal, environmental, and health consequences come into focus. It is important to keep these issues in mind as you think strategically how best to elevate issues that matter most to you and your members.

We will continue to monitor these issues closely and are here to answer any questions.

Coming Soon: Notable Hearings

Wednesday March 22nd

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Taxpayers Paid Billions For It: Why Would Moderna Consider Quadrupling the Price of the COVID Vaccine?

- [Get additional information.](#)

Thursday March 23rd

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Public Witness Hearing

- [Get additional information.](#)

Please [reach out](#) if you have any questions or need additional information.

UPDATES: BEYOND CAPITOL HILL

Stakeholders Prepare Defense As GOP Calls for Work Requirements Grow

On Capitol Hill, House Republicans are signaling interest in expanding or instituting work requirements across federal entitlement programs to rein in costs. The most likely programs in the crosshairs are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid. Both these programs expanded greatly during the COVID-19 pandemic and, with the end of the Public Health Emergency (PHE) this spring, will soon return to a pre-pandemic status. Work requirements threaten access to vital assistance for people who need it, and as we remain in a period of economic uncertainty, should not be implemented or expanded under any circumstances. The Arkansas work requirement experiment led to 1 in 4 participants losing Medicaid coverage.

With the looming debt limit crisis, House Republicans are looking to secure concessions from the Biden Administration to agree to lift the debt limit. Their aim is to secure cuts or restrict access to certain entitlement programs. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities published a timely report on this threat, which is only going to grow over the coming months.

Please [click here to read the report](#) and reach out if you have any questions.

FY24 Budget Proposes \$150B in Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Funding

President Biden's FY 2024 budget request includes \$150B in funding for HCBS over the next decade, closely aligning with the funding request in the Better Care Better Jobs Act (BCBJA). This funding is critical to supporting individuals with disabilities and seniors to remain in the community, and would also take steps to strengthen the struggling direct care workforce.

Securing funding for HCBS has been a priority item for Democrats since President Biden came into office, but it has proven difficult to win broad support in reconciliation and other large spending vehicles. Still, building out the infrastructure for HCBS and eliminating waitlists remain a top priority and will continue to receive attention, as it did last week in the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging.

HCBS Access Act Reintroduced in Senate

Last week, Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) and Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI) reintroduced the HCBS Access Act,

which would increase funding for HCBS, provide grant funding for states to expand their capacity to deliver HCBS, address the direct care worker shortage, and provide states with resources to support caregiving workers, in particular family caregivers. The goal of this legislation is to eliminate waitlists for HCBS by expanding the capacity of states to address the workforce and other capacity issues. Taken together with the BCBJA, these bills hold the potential to transform HCBS services. You can read a one-pager on the bill by [clicking here](#).

Kentucky House Passes Workforce Development Bill

The Kentucky House recently passed the [Kentucky Healthcare Workforce Development Act](#) by a vote of 92-1. The bill now heads to the Senate and if passed would establish a mechanism for public-private partnerships to strengthen workforce training and education for health care professions. The first program would match funds invested by a private entity in order to fund scholarships for health care professionals, including registered nurses, LPNs, and nurse aides. The second program would reward excellence among health care educational and training programs with benchmarks and other measurements. This is a prominent issue to watch and could be a model for other states or nationally, as Congress considers how to strengthen the health care workforce.

ISSUE OF THE WEEK: Senate Budget Committee Holds FY24 Budget Hearing

On March 15, 2023, the Senate Budget Committee held a hearing to discuss the FY24 budget, featuring the Director of the Office of Management and Budget Shalanda Young. The hearing featured a number of contentious topics, including President Biden's plan to raise taxes on certain upper income households. Republicans questioned this plan and discussed extending certain Trump-era tax cuts. The House Republican plan to extend tax cuts and preserve funding for Social Security, Medicare, and defense was also featured, as Democrats highlighted a Congressional Budget Office report which states that such a plan would not be feasible or successful in fully eliminating the federal deficit.

This is all relevant as both sides gear up for a fight on the debt limit crisis, and Republicans look for ways to secure cuts to social spending programs.

ON THE HORIZON

Interagency Committee on Disability Research to Hold Webinar on COVID-19 and Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

The Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) will host, "COVID-19 Data on Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities." During this webinar, attendees will hear information about state collection and reporting of COVID-19 data for the I/DD population.

Presenters will include:

- Emma Plourde, Public Health Policy Analyst, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, HHS
 - William Haltermann III, Program Specialist, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, HHS
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At the end of the presentation, there will be a 15-minute Q&A session.

- [Register ahead of time for this webinar on March 22, 2023 at 12pm ET.](#)

HCBS Webinar: Getting the Services You Need from the Waiver – Participant Direction

The Administration on Community Living (ACL) is hosting a webinar as part of their series on the HCBS Settings Rule. The webinar will review Appendix E – Participant Direction in the HCBS Waiver application and how it impacts the quality of services individuals receive. The presentation will discuss components of how self-direction services will be offered and what it means for stakeholders. Nancy Thaler, Senior Advisor at ACL and Katherine Murray, President of Applied Self-Direction, will be leading the presentation. For more information, [please 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 on attending this virtual event.

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

The Hill to Hold Virtual Disability Summit

On March 29, *The Hill* is scheduled to hold a virtual disability summit that will address “practical solutions to increase employment across the disability community and achieving employment for all.” Speakers at the summit will include Representative Debbie Dingell (MI), Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus, Armando Contreras, CEO of UCP, and Day Al-Mohamed, the Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council for Disability Policy.

- [Register for the free summit on March 29 at 1pm ET.](#)

Applications for the Commit to Connect Community of Practice is now open.

The Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living is seeking applicants for the Commit to Connect initiative. This initiative is seeking to increase the availability of evidence based programs and services that address social isolation and loneliness by better understanding the current impacts programs and interventions have on social programs.

- [Learn more about the program.](#)
- [Apply by March 29th.](#)

NCEA Webinar: The Range of Remedies in Elder Mistreatment

The National Center on Elder Abuse is hosting a webinar to discuss the range and effectiveness of elder justice remedies and interventions, including restorative justice, criminal and civil legal remedies, and best practices in the field. The webinar will be held on April 12, 2023, starting at 1PM ET. For more information, please [click here](#).

RECOMMENDED READS

- *Kaiser Health News* – “[Seniors With Anxiety Frequently Don’t Get Help. Here’s Why.](#)”
- *Disability Scoop* – “[Biden Budget Seeks Added Spending On Special Ed, Disability Programs.](#)”
- *The New York Times* – “[U.S. Could Default on Debt as Early as Summer, New Estimate Says.](#)”

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Happy Saint Patrick’s Day!

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