

DC UPDATE

January 16, 2009

Last week the 111th Congress convened and immediately set forth to address the majority's agenda. New members were sworn in and both the House and Senate made committee assignments. During this time, negotiations continued on an economic recovery package. The House unveiled its bill late yesterday, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009. Additionally, the House passed the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (H.R. 2) and the Senate Finance Committee passed their version after a long committee mark up. Congress will not be in session Monday and Tuesday in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Inauguration and related activities. NACBHDD will keep members updated as Congress convenes mid-week when we expect action on the House economic recovery package.

SCHIP

On Wednesday, January 14, 2009, the U.S. House of Representatives took up the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (H.R. 2). The legislation passed the House with bipartisan support vote of 289 to 139. The legislation will authorize the program for 4 and 1/2 years and cover an additional 4 million children. Included in the bill was a provision that will bring mental health and substance use disorders into compliance with the parity legislation passed last fall.

The legislation now moves to the Senate where the committee of jurisdiction, Senate Finance Committee. That committee passed their version of the legislation late yesterday afternoon. The legislation is expected to be on the Senate floor late next week. We encourage you to contact your Senators regarding this legislation and urge them to support the bill.

Once the Senate passes their bill, the two chambers will conference any differences.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009

Yesterday the U.S. House of Representatives released their version of the economic recovery package. The \$825 billion bill includes tax cuts and billions for domestic programs that would assist state and local government and spur job growth. There is a provision for a FMAP increase of \$87 billion. States will receive 4.8% with additional relief tied to unemployment rates. Additionally, moratoria for Medicaid and Medicare regulations would be extended until October 2009. Specific details on these and many provisions are not available, but NACBHDD will keep members posted as information becomes available.

The Senate is expected to release their version soon. We anticipate both chambers to mark up this legislation in committees as early as next week. Many have urged that the legislation be completed so that it can be signed into law by President Barack Obama in mid February.

NACBHDD will keep members posted as more details become available.

Please feel free to contact Maeghan Gilmore, Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy, at mgilmore@nacbhd.org if you have any questions.