

DC Update

May 16, 2008

Supplemental Spending Measure and Medicaid Moratoria

On Thursday May 15, 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives passed two of three amendments that make up the war supplemental spending bill including moratoria for seven Medicaid regulations. Though the actual funding amendment did not pass, the domestic provision, which includes the Medicaid moratoria, was passed by a vote of 256-166. This is not, however, enough to overturn a threatened veto from the President. The moratoria provision is the same language that the House passed in a stand alone bill (HR 5613). This legislation has been stalled in the Senate. However, that chamber did include moratoria language in their supplemental spending measure. Due to the uncertainty of H.R. 5613 in the Senate, the supplemental spending bill has become the hopeful legislative vehicle used to implement moratoria for seven Medicaid regulations.

The Senate will take up the House supplemental bill early next week and amend it with their Appropriations Committee marked up version, completed yesterday. As noted above, the Senate did include language for the Medicaid moratoria as well as a one year moratoria for the August 17 SCHIP directive. Since Congress will recess May 26 through June 2, the supplemental bill will likely be continued in the House after the break.

The director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Jim Nussle, stated that the President will veto the legislation; particularly due to policy riders associated with the wars as well as domestic spending measures like the Medicaid moratoria. NACBHDD will keep members updated as work continues. We encourage you to contact your Senators and urge them to vote for the amendment that includes the Medicaid moratoria.

The Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2008 (H.R. 5772)

On April 10, 2008 Representatives Christopher Murphy (D-CT) and Judy Biggert (R-IL) introduced legislation that would reform Section 811 supportive housing program for persons with disabilities. H.R. 5772 would produce new affordable and accessible housing units by:

- Authorizing a new and innovative Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Contract (PRAC) Demonstration program to create thousands of new Section 811 units each year without substantially increasing Section 811 appropriations levels by leveraging new set-asides of supportive housing units in federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties and HOME-funded projects. The PRAC Demonstration program will provide the essential rental subsidy to reduce rents to affordable levels for people receiving SSI in a small but significant percentage of the hundreds of thousands of units that are routinely created every year through the LIHTC and HOME programs administered by states and local jurisdictions;

- Reforming the existing Section 811 production program to better leverage other capital funding and reduce barriers to “mixed-finance” Section 811 projects. These reforms will also increase the number of units created each year through the current 811 production program;
- Streamlining Section 811 processing requirements and removing out-dated regulatory barriers; and
- Shifting fiscal responsibility for the Section 811-funded Mainstream Housing Choice Voucher program to the Section 8 budget. Although funded and renewed from 811 appropriations, these Mainstream Housing Choice Vouchers have never created new permanent supportive housing. (*Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities*)

Currently, groups are working to garner support and co-sponsors for the bill. Similar legislation is expected to be introduced in the Senate in the coming months.

National Survey on Drug Use and Health

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) recently released a report indicating that 1 in 12 teens experienced major depression last year. Female youth were more than twice as likely as males to have experienced a major depressive episode in the past year (12.7% vs. 4.6%).

To view the report click on the following link:

<http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k8/youthdepress/youthdepress.cfm>

Representatives form Congressional Down Syndrome Caucus

Recently, Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers (D-WA), Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), Pete Sessions (R-TX) and Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) formed a Congressional Down Syndrome Caucus.

The mission of the Congressional Down Syndrome Caucus is to educate members of Congress and their staff about Down syndrome. The Caucus will support legislative activities that would improve Down syndrome research, education and treatment and promote public policies that would enhance the quality of life for those with Down syndrome.

In a recent briefing, the caucus heard from the National Institute of Health regarding their plan for furthering research efforts for Down Syndrome and associated medical problems.

Check the press release and the NIH’s Down Syndrome research plan at:

<http://www.nih.gov/news/health/jan2008/nichd-22.htm>