

DC Update May 18, 2009

Health Reform

President Obama, his Administration and Congress continue to move ahead with plans to complete health reform. The President recently met with representatives from the health industry including hospitals, drug companies, insurers and others. The industry has indicated it would be in agreement to reduce costs as reform moves forward. As you may recall, the budget blueprint, adopted by Congress, contains “reconciliation” instructions if health reform legislation is not completed by October. This method allows the Senate to pass legislation with a simple majority and bypass any filibuster.

U.S. Senate

Last week the Senate Finance Committee held the third of three roundtable discussions addressing health reform issues. Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) and Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-IA) have released two policy options papers: *Transforming the Health Care Delivery System: Proposals to Improve Patient Care and Reduce Health Care Costs* and; *Expanding Health Care Coverage: Proposals to Provide Affordable Coverage to All Americans*. Each paper has been released in coordination with the committee roundtable discussions. The third policy paper will address financing health reform and is expected to be released this week. Reform legislation is expected to be considered by the committee in the coming weeks.

To view links to the papers and press releases of the roundtables please go to:

<http://finance.senate.gov/sitepages/baucus.htm>

U.S. House of Representatives

The U.S. House of Representatives’ Ways and Means Committee held a hearing last week which featured Health and Human Services Secretary, Kathleen Sebelius provided testimony addressing a public plan option and outlined 8 reform principles of the Administration. The testimony can be viewed here:

<http://waysandmeans.house.gov/hearings.asp?formmode=view&id=7734>

FY 2010 Budget

The Administration released specific details of their FY 2010 budget. Detailed budgets for agency programs were delayed due to the Administration change and delay in completing the FY 2009 budget. The Administration has outlined \$17 billion in cuts and would eliminate 121 federal programs. Many programs addressing developmental disabilities, mental health and substance use disorders have been proposed for level funding. The following are a few key items that may be of interest to NACBHDD members. Congress will now take consideration of the recommendations as it puts together the 12 annual appropriations bills.

- The CDC’s National Center on Birth Defects and DD has been slated for a \$4 million increase.
- University Centers for Excellence in DD and DD Councils were proposed level funding. Both programs are found within the Administration of Children and Families in the Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS). In the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), also within HHS, Autism and other DD programs were proposed to increase by \$6 million.

- National Institutes of Health (NIH) – National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) and National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) are all recommended for increases.
- The budget provides level funding for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SAPT) at \$1.7 billion and the Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHBG) at \$421 million. Both are administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's (CSAT) Programs of Regional and National Significance (PRNS) were proposed for an increase of \$45.7 million, \$35 million of which would be dedicated to drug treatment courts.
- The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) proposed funding represents an approximate \$2 million decrease than FY 2009. The Center for Mental Health Services is proposed to have increased funding of approx. \$16 million, including increases for children's mental health programs and grants to address homelessness. Many other programs in that center would be level funded.
- The budget recommends that the Department of Education's Safe and Drug Free Schools, a grant program to states, be eliminated.
- The Department of Justice (DOJ) program, Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act funding would be zeroed out and combined with the Department's mental health, drug and specialty courts program to bring the funding level to \$59 million. The Second Chance Act program would be increased by \$75 million.

NACBHDD will keep members updated as the appropriations process begins in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Health Reform

Last week, Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius announced the establishment of the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Health Reform. The Office will spearhead the Department's efforts to pass health reform in coordination with the White House Office of Health Reform. Additional information can be found on the [HHS website](#).

Please contact Maeghan Gilmore, mgilmore@nacbhd.org or Meliss Stein, mstein@nacbhd.org with any questions.