

## Allies for Independence Washington Insights

**Week of October 30, 2023**

### CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

Congress has until November 17<sup>th</sup> to fund the government. With Speaker Mike Johnson now in his new office, the House has laid out an ambitious schedule to pass spending bills over the coming weeks. This week they will consider the Legislative Branch, Interior-Environment, and Transportation-HUD spending bills. Next week, they will consider the Financial Services and Commerce-Justice-Science bills, and the following week they will consider the Labor-HHS-Education and Agriculture-FDA bills. The Senate is awaiting House action on these bills to begin negotiations with the House, which makes it all but certain a continuing resolution (CR) will be needed at least into early December.

Speaker Johnson is already signaling he would like to pass a CR into next year, but Democrats are unlikely to support that before a short-term CR beyond Thanksgiving, to give as much time as possible to Congress to wrap up these issues. In addition to FY24 spending bills, there are several expiring or already expired program authorizations which Congress needs to address.

The challenge for stakeholders working these issues or looking to secure support for other priorities, is that it is entirely unclear how these issues get done. We are closely following the legislative to-do list and will provide updates on how these issues get done between now and the end of the calendar year.

### ON THE RADAR

#### **Sen. Casey Introduces HCBS Relief Act**

Senator Bob Casey, along with 17 of his Democratic colleagues, introduced the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) relief Act. This legislation would provide dedicated Medicaid funds to states for two years to stabilize their HCBS service delivery networks, support recruitment, provider greater access to eligible Medicaid beneficiaries in need of HCBS. While this legislation faces a difficult path to passage, it is incredibly important legislation that continues to highlight the urgent need for investments in HCBS. For more information on this legislation, please [click here](#).

#### **Call for Presentations: 2024 Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day Symposium**

The National Council on Aging will be hosting the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day symposium on May 2, 2024. This virtual symposium is designed to raise awareness to better address the

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issues of older adult mental health and substance use disorders and highlight resources, case studies, and initiatives available to practitioners working with adults age 50+ living in the community. If you are interested in registering or learning more about this event, please [click here](#).

### **Aging and Disability Business Institute Launches Fifth CBO-Health Care Contracting Survey**

The Aging and Disability Business Institute is seeking participation in the latest Community-Based Organization and Health Care Contracting Survey. The survey is open to all types of aging and disability community-based organizations (CBOs) and networks regardless of whether they are currently contracting with a health care entity. Organizations that complete the survey will be entered into a drawing for a complimentary registration to a conference of their choice, valued at up to \$900. If you are interested in registering or learning more about this event, please [click here](#).

### **Congressional Interests Continues for Coverage to Obesity Medications**

Congress continues to discuss barriers to coverage and implications for extending coverage to anti-obesity medications (AOMs). The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently said more research is needed on whether AOMs will save money for the broader health care system before it can provide a score for legislation that would require Medicare to cover AOMs like Ozempic. Medicare currently is prohibited from covering anti-obesity medications by statute and the pending Treat and Reduce Obesity Act would change that. This is a critical issue to continue monitoring through the lens of long-term care.

## **ISSUE OF THE WEEK: Congressional Committee Examines LTSS Staffing Issues**

On October 25, 2023, the Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee held a hearing on long-term services and supports, with particular focus on the health care workforce providing these services. The committee examined proposals from the Biden Administration aimed at addressing the perceived issues facing the LTSS workforce. The first, “Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services,” would require a minimum of 80 percent of all Medicaid reimbursements for HCBS care to be directly spent on the compensation of the workforce and would limit no more than 20 percent of reimbursements to be applied to administrative and overhead costs. The second, “Minimum Staffing Standards for Long-Term Care Facilities and Medicaid Institutional Payments Transparency Reporting,” would set minimum staffing standards for registered nurses (RNs) and nurse aides (NAs) that must be onsite in a nursing home in any given week.

The Committee invited witnesses to offer their perspective on these rules and the impact they would have for patients to better understand the challenges ahead and ways to preserve access to care. Republicans were opposed to these proposals and interested in understanding whether the proposals would make a meaningful difference in improving workforce shortages impacting long-term care facilities. While many Democrats defended the proposals or highlighted the issue and need to take action, many Democrats on the committee were absent from the hearing, which could signal some concern with the proposals and impact it would have on providers.

## **ON THE HORIZON**

### **HHS Schedules Drug Price Negotiation Listening Sessions**

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Over the next month, HHS will hold listening sessions on drug price negotiations for the following drugs:

- Eliquis: October 30, 2023; 12pm ET
- Enbrel: October 31, 2023; 12pm ET
- Entresto: November 1, 2023; 12pm ET
- Farxiga: November 2, 2023; 12pm ET
- Fiasp/NovoLog: November 3, 2023; 12pm ET
- Imbruvica: November 6, 2023; 12pm ET
- Januvia: November 7, 2023; 12pm ET
- Jardiance: November 8, 2023; 12pm ET
- Stelara: November 14, 2023; 12pm ET
- Xarelto: November 15, 2023; 12pm ET

For more information on these listening sessions, please [click here](#).

## **ALLIES FOR INDEPENDENCE POLICY SYMPOSIUM**

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who attended the Allies for Independence Policy Symposium. It was a fantastic event with a variety of speakers who shared updates on important policy issues, including the landscape around self-directed care, home- and community-based services (HCBS) funding, reforming the pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) industry, and insurance industry updates. Thank you to all the speakers for making this an enormously successful event.

If you are interested in re-watching the event, you can do so by [clicking here](#). Please enter this passcode to watch the event: UigT%F9

## **RECOMMENDED READS**

- *ALM Benefits Pro* – [Caregiving crisis prompts search for long-term care solutions](#)
- *Inside Health Policy* – [E&C Republicans Slam Biden Admin for LTSS, Nursing Home Proposals](#)
- *Fast Company* – [How to make workplaces more inclusive for people with invisible disabilities](#)

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