

## Allies for Independence Washington Insights

**Week of February 28, 2023**

### CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

Congress is back in session for the next five weeks with an eye towards getting the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress off and running. President Biden is set to unveil the FY24 budget which will formally kick off the appropriations process. House Republicans are signaling they will flex their new majority by proposing cuts to a variety of domestic spending programs, in addition to changes to the newly created Community Project Funding (“earmarks”) process.

With the new majority in the House, expect both chambers to embark on their own appropriations hearings and markups. The stakes are extremely high this year due to the slow-moving debt limit crisis, which makes it difficult to forecast how FY24 appropriations get done. The White House and House Republicans will meet again soon to discuss breaking the impasse over the debt limit. House Republicans insist on securing cuts to certain federal programs for support in raising the debt limit. While Republicans have walked away from Social Security and Medicare cuts, Medicaid, SNAP, and other social spending programs will be at risk.

House Appropriations Chair Kay Granger (TX), who has been in Congress since 1997, and Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray (WA), who has been in Congress since 1993, will lead FY24 appropriations negotiations. Both are veterans of high stakes bicameral budget negotiations and will have to work through dozens of significant issues to overcome intense partisanship to secure a bipartisan, bicameral agreement.

#### **Community Project Funding (“earmarks”) Update**

House Republicans announced this week that they will ban earmarks to the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill in FY24. Under the new rules announced this week, earmark spending will be capped at 0.5 percent of total discretionary spending. For reference, the FY23 omnibus included \$15.3 billion in earmarks, accounting for 0.9 percent of discretionary spending. This is an unfortunate development for many nonprofit and local governments who leveraged earmarks to improve access or strengthen services for vulnerable populations and communities. However, Senate Democrats will accept LHHS earmark requests.

This change will put increased pressure on the Senate to ensure their Labor, HHS, Education earmark

requests remain in the final package. We will be following this process closely as each chamber moves forward with FY24 appropriations.

## **Senators Introduce Bipartisan Bill Meant to Assist Aging Veterans with Long Term Care**

This week, Senators Tester (MT), Moran (KS), Murray (WA), and Rounds (SD) introduced a bill, the “Expanding Veterans’ Options for Long Term Care Act.” The new legislation would create a pilot program for eligible veterans to receive assisted living care that would be paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The pilot program would be conducted at six Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs) nationwide, with at least two program sites located in rural or highly rural areas.

- [View the draft legislation, “Expanding Veterans’ Options for LTC Act.”](#)

## **Coming Soon: Notable Hearings**

### **Tuesday March 7<sup>th</sup>**

Senate Finance Committee

Tax Policy’s Role in Increasing Affordable Housing Supply for Working Families

- [Get additional information.](#)

### **Wednesday March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

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 23<sup>rd</sup>**

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education

Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Public Witness Hearing

The deadline to submit requests to testify is Friday March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

- [Get additional information.](#)

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

## **UPDATES: BEYOND CAPITOL HILL**

### **March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month!**

Just a note to let you know that March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness (DDAM) Month. The purpose of DDAM is to raise awareness of inclusion and contributions of individuals with developmental disabilities. 2023’s theme is “Beyond the Conversation,” and focuses on what will come next for this population. This includes innovation in technologies and how individuals and communities are working to ensure this population can live and work in their own communities through education, employment and

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accessibility.

- Get additional information on DDAM from the [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#), and be sure to [register for the Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center \(DETAC\) Webinar](#) on celebrating DDAM, which is scheduled for March 14th at 3pm ET.

## **White House Releases New Fact Sheet on its Work to Support Black Disabled Americans**

In honor of Black History Month, the Biden White House released a new “Fact Sheet: The Biden-Harris Administration’s Work to Support Black Disabled Americans.” The fact sheet outlines the actions that this Administration has taken to bring equitable change to Black individuals with disabilities. This includes hosting an event in 2022 at the Department of Labor (DOL) related to understanding the role of Black disabled workers in the economy and promoting equitable disability determinations

- [View the press release on the “Fact Sheet” from the White House to learn more.](#)

## **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Releases New Information Related to Unwinding of COVID Public Health Emergency**

This week, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released updates related to how the Medicare, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Marketplace programs will be affected at the conclusion of the PHE (May 11, 2023). CMS is taking these steps to keep health care providers informed as standards for compliance with CMS requirements are restored and other provider waivers will conclude as described in the updates. CMS’s approach aligns with the Biden-Harris Administration’s priority for an orderly, predictable transition leading into the close of the COVID-19 PHE.

- [View the updated information.](#)
- [View information on the PHE for individuals who may have limited English language proficiency or disabilities released this week.](#)

## **Disability Organizations Release 2023 Case for Inclusion**

This week, United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) along with the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), released the 2023 “Case for Inclusion.” The new report notes that there are nearly half a million individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) on wait lists for services and supports across the country. In addition, the report notes that 22 percent of individuals with I/DD who received employment or day services were participating in integrated employment. This is the highest number recorded since 2001! Finally, the Case for Inclusion highlights the vital role and important changes that the direct support workforce needs to continue making community living accessible.

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- [View the “2023 Case for Inclusion.”](#)

## **U.S. Department of Labor Releases Request for Information Related to Direct Care Workforce Development**

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) recently released a request for information (RFI) which requests comments from stakeholders involved directly and indirectly in economic and workforce development. While the RFI includes a large variety of workforce development areas and strategies, we want to point out that DOL seeks specific information related to the direct care workforce.

- [Comments must be submitted by 5pm ET on March 24, 2023.](#)

## **The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Issues Updated Guidance on Supportive Housing for the Elderly**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) updated guidance to enhance supportive programs for seniors living in Section 202 housing. As you may be aware, Section 202 is the only federally funded program that is specifically aimed at meeting the affordable housing needs of American seniors. Some of these supportive programs include meals, transportation, health, and wellness. HUD will ensure that these programs are in effect by making sure each owner of housing has a Supportive Services Plan to describe how the property will provide the range of services required.

- [View the newly released guidance from HUD.](#)

## **ISSUE OF THE WEEK: Administration to Hold Webinar on HCBS and PHE Flexibilities Unwinding**

### **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to Hold Webinar on Unwinding Home and Community-Based Services Public Health Emergency Flexibilities**

On March 15, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will hold a webinar to discuss Unwinding Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Public Health Emergency (PHE) Flexibilities. Not only will the webinar discuss state requirements and opportunities for resuming Medicaid HCBS operations, but it will also include the following:

1. CMS resources to support states in unwinding PHE flexibilities, including considerations for HCBS.
2. Overview of HCBS-related PHE flexibilities to unwind, with a focus on the 1915(c) HCBS Appendix K authority.
3. Overview of HCBS-related PHE flexibilities that can be made permanent in 1915(c) waivers and

the CMS approval process.

4. Other considerations for HCBS programs when unwinding from the PHE.
  - [Register for the webinar on March 15 from 2-3:30pm ET.](#)

## **ON THE HORIZION**

### **Alliance for Health Policy to Hold Webinar on Person-Centered Care**

Tomorrow afternoon, the Alliance for Health Policy will hold a webinar, “Moving Beyond COVID-19: Considerations for using PHE Flexibilities to Improve Person Centered Care.” This virtual public event will feature a diverse panel of experts to discuss considerations for using the PHE flexibilities to improve person-centered, equitable care for older adults, as well as highlight the background context, and high-level tradeoffs of telehealth policy that policymakers will need to contend with in the near future.

- [Register for the webinar on March 3rd at 12pm ET.](#)

### **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

At the end of the presentation, there will a 15-minute Q&A session.

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

### **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!

## RECOMMENDED READS

- [Kaiser Health News – “Dementia Care Programs Help, If Caregivers Can Find Them”](#)
- [Senators Introduce Bipartisan Legislation \(Expanding Veterans’ Options for Long Term Care Act\) to Assist Aging Veterans in Living More Independently](#)
- [Health Affairs - Congress Expected to Work with Stakeholders on How to Improve Disability Policies in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.](#)

## A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Thank you for your continued support of Allies for Independence. We hope you enjoy reading our “Washington Insights” Newsletter. Allies for Independence continues its work in bringing disability, aging, chronic illness, and other stakeholder groups together to work on creating a new non-Medicaid Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) financing model. Our weekly newsletter focuses on news you can use, as well as all topics related to LTSS.

We welcome all [feedback](#) from our readers.

Sincerely, Connie Garner  
Executive Director

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**Allies for Independence promotes inclusion, equity, and economic security across the lifespan!**

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