

Allies for Independence Washington Insights

Week of March 20, 2023

CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

The big news on Capitol Hill this week is reports that House Republicans will propose cutting spending levels back to FY2022 levels. This amounts to a \$130 billion reduction from this year's spending and will lead to significant cuts across domestic spending programs. Republicans are already pushing back against attacks from the White House and leading House Democrats, which will only intensify as discussions around lifting the debt limit increase.

This is the issue of the year until it is resolved as it has the potential to wreak havoc on the nation's economy, which has proven fragile in recent weeks after several regional bank failures. We will be following this issue very closely as Secretary Becerra testifies before the House next week on the Administration's FY24 budget.

Both chambers will be in session next week before embarking on a two week recess, which coincides with Easter and Passover. Please [reach out](#) if you have any questions or need additional information.

Coming Soon: Notable Hearings

Tuesday March 28, 2023

House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee

“Lowering Unaffordable Costs: Examining Transparency and Competition in Health Care”

- [Get additional information.](#)

Tuesday March 28, 2023

House Committee on Ways and Means

“Hearing on President Biden's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request with HHS Secretary Becerra”

- [Get additional information.](#)

Wednesday March 29, 2023

House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee

“Fiscal Year 2024 Department of Health and Human Services Budget”

- [Get additional information.](#)

UPDATES: BEYOND CAPITOL HILL

Guardianship In the News

Bloomberg Law published an investigation into the adult guardianship industry, highlighting that most guardianship cases do not receive the level of interest or attention as the Britney Spears case did until 2021. The five-part series is well worth your time, as this issue impacts individuals across the long-term services and supports domain. Importantly, the article highlights the lack of consistent standards around guardianship, and how the patchy framework guiding this process is rife for abuse. You can read Part 1 and access the remaining sections by [clicking here](#).

In Las Vegas, Biden Highlights Action to Lower Rx Costs, Support for Long-Term Care

Last week, President Biden highlighted the impact the Inflation Reduction Act was having on out-of-pocket costs for seniors. Specifically, he cited a report that showed 3.4 million Medicare beneficiaries paid \$234 million in out-of-pocket costs for recommended vaccines covered by Part D in 2021. As of January 2023, these vaccines are now free thanks to policies included in the Inflation Reduction Act. This policy is in addition to the \$35 monthly cap on insulin, which could save as much as \$500 per year for seniors.

The Biden Administration’s plan for Older Americans states that seniors deserve to retire with dignity and to be able to access quality, affordable long-term care. We must continue to hold the Administration accountable to these priorities and work collaboratively to advance the issue in meaningful ways.

You can read more about the Administration’s recent announcement by [clicking here](#).

Deadly Fungus Reported in More States in 2021

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [announced this week](#) that a deadly fungus, known as Candida auris, has spread at an alarming rate over the past few years. Over the course of two years, the fungus has been reported in over 25 states, with higher concentrations in California, Nevada, Texas, and Florida. Candida auris is especially dangerous because it resists treatment by common antifungal medications, and can harm older people due to weakened immune systems, or those in long-term care facilities and nursing homes.

One of the Administration’s top priorities is addressing antimicrobial resistance. It is important to track issues like this, which underscore the value of home- and community-based services.

AARP Report on Family Caregivers Highlights Uncompensated Care

A recent report from AARP highlights the integral family caregivers play in our health care system. These caregivers have provided an estimated 36 billion hours of care in 2021, but most of these caregivers are

working in hourly wage positions. AARP believes that resources and financial assistance should be provided to caregivers to assist in relieving the financial and emotional strain that falls on caregivers.

- The full report is linked [here](#)
- The highlights from the report are linked [here](#)

Kentucky Workforce Development Bill Passes Legislature

After the Kentucky House passed the [Kentucky Healthcare Workforce Development Act](#) by a vote of 92-1, the Senate followed suit passing the bill 35-1. The bill now heads to Gov. Andy Beshear's desk and, if signed, would establish a mechanism for public-private partnerships to strengthen workforce training and education for health care professions. As Congress considers how to strengthen the health care workforce, this is a model to watch to assess if it meaningfully addresses local workforce issues.

ISSUE OF THE WEEK: New Medicaid Waiver “Settings” Rule Takes Effect

This month, a new and long-awaited Medicaid rule took effect, establishing standards for what counts as home and community-based services (HCBS). The regulation requires that programs meet certain criteria to qualify as community-based and eligible for funding provided by Medicaid HCBS waivers. This rule was delayed from taking effect repeatedly, most recently after the onset of the COVID-19 public health emergency, but is now taking effect this month.

Most states have corrective action plans with CMS to allow for more time to come into compliance with the rule, which will take months to work through. This will be problematic for beneficiaries and providers offering services across states.

As Medicaid providers and beneficiaries confront a number of challenges over the coming months, it will be important to monitor how states and CMS accommodate different issues and what it means for accessing HCBS.

ON THE HORIZON

The Hill's Disability Summit Next Wednesday March 29th

The Hill is convening policymakers, business, and nonprofit leaders for a discussion on solutions to increase employment across the disability community and achieving employment for all. Day Al-Mohamed, Director, White House Domestic Policy Council for Disability Policy, Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI), and Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL), are speakers at the summit. For more information, please [click here](#).

Webinar Series: Improving and Expanding Community Living Options for People with I/DD

On Wednesday, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) is hosting the first webinar in a series

of three on expanding community living options for people with disabilities. The first webinar, “Community Living Housing Options for People with I/DD: Perspectives on Barriers and Solutions,” will be March 29th at 3 PM ET. The webinar will provide (1) a baseline understanding of the unique barriers people with I/DD face in getting housing in the community and their specific housing needs; (2) information on a broad array of federal, state, and local programs and partnerships to address housing barriers and needs; and (3) an opportunity to learn from experiences and successes of self-advocates navigating barriers to secure accessible and affordable housing in the community. For more information, please [click here](#).

New Funding Opportunities for the Lifespan Respite Care Program

This week, ACL announced two new funding opportunities to eligible entities under the Lifespan Respite Care Program. The goals of the program include improving equitable access to, and quality of, respite care services to all family caregivers. The first of the funding opportunities is titled, “Lifespan Respite Care Program: State Program Enhancement Grants,” and the second opportunity is titled, “Lifespan Respite Care Program: Grants to New States and States Re-Establishing Their Core Respite Infrastructures.” Both grants funding deadlines are May 15, 2023. For more information, please [click here](#).

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

- *New York Times* – [Senior care is crushingly expensive. Boomers aren’t ready.](#)
- *Associated Press* – [New Mexico Gov to abusive caregivers: “We’re coming for you”](#)
- *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* – [Inspectors uncover dangers at Georgia Facilities for vulnerable adults](#)

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