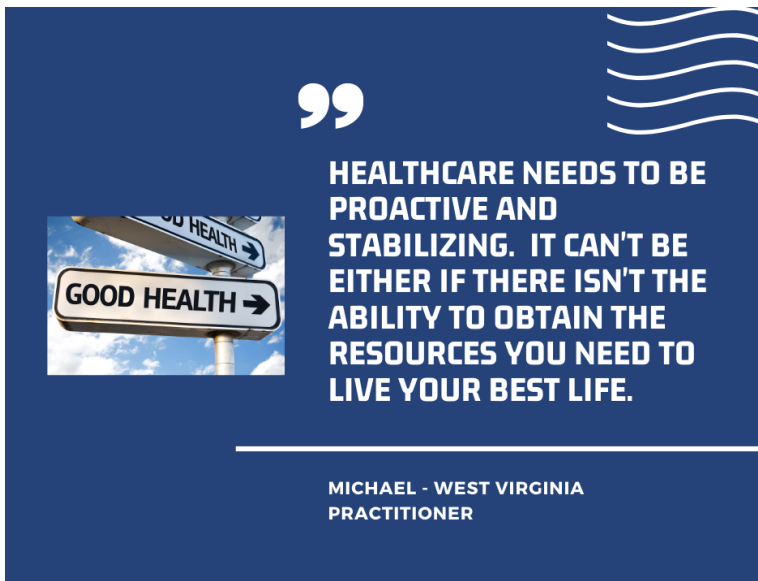


HEALTH CARE REVIEW

AUGUST 2020 | ISSUE 5



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HEALTHCARE NEEDS TO BE PROACTIVE AND STABILIZING. IT CAN'T BE EITHER IF THERE ISN'T THE ABILITY TO OBTAIN THE RESOURCES YOU NEED TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE.

MICHAEL - WEST VIRGINIA PRACTITIONER

As we head into fall and COVID-19 shows no signs of retreating, we at West Virginians for Affordable Health Care are continuing to move forward and anticipate another busy few months. In addition to our regular work, we have spent a lot of summer responding to policy issues around the pandemic. While this has changed how some of our work looks, WVAHC has continued to be a voice to uplift public policy that furthers our mission. We have worked with state government, local partners, and national partners to keep the public updated and informed and to advocate for relief policies for all Americans impacted by COVID over the past few months.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

But we continue to move forward to the fall, where we will ramp up efforts to educate about proactive policies on our 2021 West Virginia Health Agenda. This will be the third year that we have created this health agenda as a way to direct our work and to collaborate with partner organizations to bring bold--but achievable--policy ideas to the legislature that encompass our mission statement:

“Our mission is to bring a consumer voice to public policy so that every West Virginian has quality, affordable health care and the opportunity to lead an informed, healthy, and productive life.”

In order to do this work, we will be hosting a series of virtual candidate forums across the state prior to the November 3rd election as well as two summits, our Annual Medicaid Summit and our new Health Care for All Summit. (Be on the lookout for more information about these events occurring in September and October).

While we still do not know what will happen with COVID-19, we are making progress as an organization mostly due to the outstanding efforts of the staff of WVAHC. Throughout the pandemic, staff has consistently shown up to do the difficult work and because of that we keep moving onward and upward!

If you would like to help us in our efforts to send an electronic letter in support of an additional COVID relief bill that addresses issues outlined in this newsletter, please visit: <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-sens-manchin-capito-protect-critical-health-care-and-public-services-now>

If you have lost your insurance and would like to explore your options for coverage, visit our [website](#) and if you haven't already, follow us on [Facebook](#) for all the latest coronavirus updates as they happen and up-to-date event information.

2020 MEDICAID SUMMIT COMING VIRTUALLY! OCTOBER 2020

We will be holding our annual **Medicaid Summit** virtually throughout the month of October! We are looking forward to hosting a variety of experts on Medicaid and other related issues. Panels will include looking at the Social Determinants of Health, racial justice, disability visibility, Medicaid during the time of COVID-19 and others.

CEUS WILL BE OFFERED AGAIN THIS YEAR!
Keep an eye out for further information!



Health Care for All Campaign

It's been an exciting and productive few months for the Health Care for All Campaign. All four coordinators are doing amazing work. Thank you, **Amber Roberts** and **Lisa Doyle-Parsons** from the Circles Campaign of the Mid-Ohio Valley; **Kim Jones** from Cabell County; **Adam Starks** from Barbour County and **Hunter Starks** from Kanawha County. And last, but certainly not least, thanks to our state wide coordinator extraordinaire, **Alex Gallo**. Each coordinator is reaching out and listening to people in their communities, engaging them via surveys, and phone banking in order to get input on our Health Care for All legislative agenda for 2021.


Our Virtual Town Halls were held in June and July and also designed to garner input for our 2012 legislative agenda. All of the virtual town halls went well, and we learned a lot about technology. Next up is our virtual Health Care for All Summit. **Mark your calendars for Sept. 21, and 22nd. Our Summit will take place each day from 6 pm-7:30 pm.**

Day 1 will include:

- Medicaid and Managed Care Organizations (MCO's)
- Health care coverage options available for those who have lost their health insurance or don't qualify for Medicaid
- Stories from a health care practitioner and Medicaid recipient
- A Federal Update on the latest from Congress

Day 2 will include:

- A review of our Legislative victories from the 2020 Health Care for All legislative agenda
- A detailed review by our coordinators of our 2021 Health Care for All legislative agenda
- Call to Action: Coming together to fight for better, more affordable health care



West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
Consumer Voices for Health Care

600 Leon Sullivan Way
Suite 215
Charleston, West Virginia 25301
681.265.9008

Medicaid's Future: Paths Forward to Address Non-Medical Interventions

WVAHC is working with a coalition of West Virginia organizations on a state-level Health Agenda 2021. The Agenda includes a call for the state to create a Task Force to recommend how the state can improve and expand how Medicaid addresses non-medical needs that impact health (sometimes called "social determinants of health").

WVAHC is finishing up a background paper on this topic that highlights the various policy changes that can expand the availability of non-medical interventions.

Research has documented what is common sense to West Virginians – there are non-medical factors that influence health status: access to healthy foods and eating habits, safe housing, safe neighborhoods, reliable transportation, education, time and safe space for exercise, domestic violence, and overall economic stability (that is, worrying about how to pay bills can be harmful to your health). Some studies have shown that medical care accounts for only 10 percent of health outcomes, with many other factors driving the remaining 90 percent.

This is an often-cited example: to reduce respiratory attacks and ER trips for a child with asthma, buy the family an air-conditioner. The cost of the air-conditioner will be much less than the treatment costs of the repeated attacks.

One path forward – but not the only one – that the Task Force could look at is North Carolina's "Healthy Opportunities Pilots." These pilots were approved in 2018 by the federal government as part of North Carolina's 1115 Medicaid waiver to transition to managed care. CMS authorized \$650 million in Medicaid funding for the Healthy Opportunities Pilots over five years. It is important to note that 1115 waivers require federal Medicaid spending to not go up beyond predicted levels – the "budget neutrality" requirement. The federal government accepted North Carolina's case to support expenditures on non-medical interventions as saving Medicaid money within the 5-year demonstration period. The North Carolina 1115 waiver signals to other states that the federal government is opening the door to using federal Medicaid funds to pay for non-medical services and interventions.

The Pilots will create a unique opportunity to test the impact on health outcomes and health care costs by using Medicaid funds to pay for non-medical interventions specifically related to food, housing, transportation, and interpersonal safety. Additionally, the Pilots will provide a mechanism for Medicaid managed care organizations, providers and human service organizations (e.g., community-based organizations or social service agencies) to have the tools, infrastructure, and financing to integrate non-medical services into the delivery of health care for eligible Medicaid enrollees.

*For more information about the West Virginia Health Agenda 2021 and to join our effort email: **Jessie Ice** at jessica@wvahc.org*



WVAHC Fights for Medicaid Funds in New COVID-19 Relief Package

As the Senate continues to negotiate about what will be in the next COVID-19 relief package, WVAHC has partnered with our allies to send a loud and strong message to Senators Manchin and Capito: the package must include more federal Medicaid funds. So far, the package fails to address Medicaid.

Our message is being delivered through virtual meetings and conversations with the Senators and their staff. In addition, we organized a West Virginia Medicaid Coalition sign-on letter to the Senators. We have used a phone campaign to generate more than 1,600 calls to the Senators' offices so far. The phone campaign is complimented by a texting campaign targeting 60,000 West Virginians asking them to sign a petition to the Senators and to contact them directly. We held a virtual press conference on July 23 and another press conference is in the works.

West Virginia is at high risk of a significant revenue shortfall in our current fiscal year due to the COVID-19 driven recession and increased unemployment rates. At the same time, the demands on West Virginia Medicaid are increasing. Since March, West Virginia has seen an increase in Medicaid enrollment of 30,000 people. Of the 130,000 West Virginians lost their jobs and job-based health coverage during this crisis, 63 percent are estimated to be eligible for Medicaid and could sign up any time for the program.

Governor Justice already diverted Medicaid "reserve funds" to fill in revenue shortfalls in the state 2020 budget. The perception that these funds are not needed is an illusion. Even without COVID-19, these funds were set aside so that over the next several years to continue the Medicaid program that we have today. Without these funds, just medical inflation could force cuts to Medicaid eligibility, benefits, and provider payments. With increased demand on Medicaid from COVID-19, now is not the time to put Medicaid on the state chopping block. Without additional Medicaid federal dollars, that is the reality we face.

Our key asks for the COVID-19 relief package are:

1. Strengthen Medicaid through a second boost to the Medicaid federal matching rate (FMAP) to cover an additional influx in enrollment, helps fill in potential revenue shortfalls that could cause cuts to eligibility, benefits, and provider reimbursement rates, and that gives our state the resources needed to respond effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Include a Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Medicaid provision to protect existing coverage in all states.
3. Reopen the ACA exchanges and provide additional premium relief to lower-income enrollees by establishing a COVID-19 special enrollment period and enhancing ACA advanced premium tax credits ensure more individuals can afford quality coverage on the marketplace.
4. Recognize that food security and good health are intertwined by boosting SNAP benefits. SNAP is one of the most effective ways to help low-income households and to provide counter-cyclical fiscal stimulus in recessions.

**Please contact
Senators Manchin and Capito!**

**ell them that the Senate COVID-19
fiscal relief package must be
passed and must include more
federal money for Medicaid**

**Sign the petition at
bit.ly/wvcovidresponse
and be patched through to their
offices!**



MEMBERSHIP FORM

REMINDER...WE ARE ONLY AS STRONG AS YOUR SUPPORT
PLEASE CONSIDER HOW TO CONTRIBUTE!

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

\$20 CONCERNED CITIZEN

\$50 HEALTH BOOSTER

\$100 MOUNTAIN STRONG

\$500 AND UP HEALTH CARE CHAMPION

Action Supporter: Students/under-employed folks -- signup as a member and share information on issues with friends; write letters to the editor to share your concerns on health care topics, make your legislators aware of how much health care issues mean to you!

Name:

Sreet:

City:

State:

Zip

Phone:

Email: (Please print clearly)

If you prefer to donation online, [please click here.](#)