05/14/2021

Good Evening REDC Members,

Below is your policy update for the week:

I. SERVE Act

- **SERVE Act Cosponsor Additions**
  - o Reps. Perlmutter (D-CO), Van Drew (R-NJ), Johnson (D-GA), Baird (R-IN), Harder (D-CA), Khanna (D-CA), Trone (D-MD).
- **Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing (summary attached)**
  - o Earlier this week, SASC held a hearing on the FY22 military and civilian personnel programs in the Department of Defense (where the SERVE Act resides)
  - o Sen. Gillibrand (D-NY) pressed witnesses on servicemember/families lack of access to medical, behavioral, and mental health care, including stigma within the military accessing behavioral health services.
  - o Sen. Gillibrand also pursued a line of questioning about unfair recruiting standards that discriminate against female servicemembers.
    - ▪ **This included an exchange between the Senator and Lieutenant General David Ottignon on the inaccuracy of using BMI as an appropriate standard to measure fitness. A clip of this exchanged can be viewed [here.](#)**

II. Telehealth

- **Telehealth State Commercial Coverage & Payment Parity**
  - o Please see the attached spreadsheet for a review of the current state laws regarding telehealth coverage and reimbursement for commercial plans.
    - ▪ For more information on any of the state laws, please visit the Center for Connected Health Policy [here.](#)
- **FCC Broadband Benefit Program Open**
  - o The benefit program allows eligible households to receive a $50 per month subsidy for broadband service ($75 for those on tribal lands), and a one-time $100 discount for purchase of a computer or tablet.
  - o To learn more about the program and to apply visit: https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit
- **Telehealth Flexibilities Post-Pandemic**
  - o Congress is still negotiating on what a post-pandemic telehealth landscape will look like.

- o A recent CBO score estimated that the removal of rural and home restrictions for mental health would increase spending by $1.65 billion over 10 years.
  - ▪ The end-of-year spending bill lifted these restrictions under Medicare for mental health services, but added a provision requiring a doctor to have seen the patient in person within the previous 6 months.
- o Stakeholders (including the REDC Consortium) look toward negotiating with Congress and the Biden administration to come up with some permanency in coverage and reimbursement either in a budget reconciliation package or an end-of-year spending bill.

III. ACA

- **Energy & Commerce Hearing on FY22 HHS Budget (summary memo attached)**
  - o Earlier this week, the House E&C Committee, Health Subcommittee held a hearing with HHS Secretary Becerra on the agency's budget request.
  - o Secretary Becerra stated they're underway with a review of the Trump administration's short-term, limited duration insurance plans (STLDI) final rule.
- **HHS Reinstates Protections for Transgender Patients**
  - o The Biden Administration stated it would enforce anti-discrimination protections for gay and transgender patients, reversing the Trump administration's narrowing of those protections.
  - o The HHS civil rights office will again investigate complaints against health providers, insurers and others refusing to cover or provide care to transgender patients.

IV. Parity

- **State Parity Call**
  - o The full slide deck with an update on parity bills in the state are attached.
  - o **Missouri: HB 889**
    - ▪ Passed the state house and is moving to the governor's desk to be signed into law.
    - ▪ Requires health insurers to comply with MHPAEA.
    - ▪ Gives Director the power to enforce and promulgate regulations.
- **Thursday, May 27, 10-11 am EST Webinar on Parity**
  - o The Kennedy Forum is hosting a webinar entitled, "Mental Health Parity: Ending Discrimination in Health Insurance Coverage" with Department of Labor Secretary Walsh, former Rep. Patrick Kennedy and NY State Office of Mental Health Commissioner Sullivan

- o **You can register [here.](here)**

Many thank to my Center Road colleagues as we all divide and conquer to make these policy updates as comprehensive as possible.

Wishing all of you a restful weekend,
Allison