

05/28/2021

Good Afternoon REDC Members,

The Biden Administration's FY22 budget is expected to drop today. We will be giving you a full update on the budget provisions relevant to the REDC Consortium on Tuesday.

Wishing all of you a Happy Memorial Day weekend!
Center Road Solutions Team

I. Health Insurance

• Senate HELP Committee & House E&C Committee Support Public Option

- HELP Chairwoman Murray (D-WA) and Energy & Commerce Chairman Pallone (D-NJ) announced earlier this week supporting the creation of a government-run public option.
- The Committee Chairs cited the pandemic's effects on the uninsured in a new letter to colleagues that solicited ideas on who the program should cover and what benefits it should offer.
- While the idea polls well across the political spectrum, it faces unanimous opposition from Republicans, resistance from powerful health industry interests, and skepticism from some Democratic moderates.
- The preliminary nature of the committee leaders' announcement and the July 31 deadline they set for colleagues' input, leaves little time to make meaningful progress this year.
- Biden's budget plan is expected to endorse a public option without offering a detailed proposal or cost estimate.

• Connecticut Public Option Shelved Again

- The state legislature is preparing to shelve a public option proposal for the third consecutive year.
- The bill, which would have allowed union, nonprofits, and small businesses to buy into the state health benefits plan, faced long odds in a state that is home to huge insurance companies.
 - The heads of Anthem, Cigna, CVS Health, UnitedHealth Group, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, and Tufts Health Plan stated to Gov. Lamont they could leave the state if the bill becomes law.

II. Telehealth

• Bipartisan Bill Looks to Cover Kids

- Senators Carper (D-DE) and Cornyn (R-TX) introduced legislation aimed at expanding telehealth access for low-income children.

- The [Telehealth Improvement for Kids' Essential Services Act](#) would lay out strategies for states to implement more telehealth options and research how to boost access for enrollees in Medicaid and CHIP.

III. Parity

- **Congressional Letter to HHS Secretary Becerra**

- Co-Chair of the Mental Health Caucus Congressman Napolitano (D-CA) and 18 other members wrote to Secretary Becerra urging HHS to ensure MH/SUD is integrated into the \$7.6 billion to expand the public health workforce.
- A copy of the letter is attached.

- **Kennedy Forum Webinar on Mental Health Parity**

- ICYMI, the Kennedy Forum hosted a webinar entitled, "Mental Health Parity: Ending Discrimination in Health Insurance Coverage."
- A recording of the webinar can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCEATUtBcUY>
- The slide here shows the recent actions taken to end discrimination in mental health care
here: <https://www.thekennedyforum.org/app/uploads/2021/05/Ending-Discrimination-webinar-slide.pdf>