

07/02/2021

Hi REDC Members,

Below is your policy update for the week:

I. SERVE Act

- House are in recess until July 12th, and there are no new cosponsors.
- We've had meetings with some of our leads this week on NDAA inclusion strategy. In short even with the lower CBO score, Moulton doesn't believe the SERVE text will be in the base bill, meaning we'll need to do an amendment during the full committee markup.
 - The hurdle (while not nearly as big as last year) still remains that we need to offset the \$2M mandatory spending. Moulton's office seems to not have any ideas on how, so we began working with Tillis office on what that could look like.
- Also as an important note, our partner organization Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) said that they wouldn't be able to support anything if it took away from service member benefits or increased premiums for service members. MOAA is a very powerful entity in the scope of military personnel issues, so this could be a hurdle too as there aren't too many pots to open things up.
- Tillis is going to chat with the Committee staff in the Senate to see if they can find that offset. They also said that there are a couple of things they can do to try and include it, but they're hopeful that the SERVE Act is in the underlying NDAA bill since Shaheen and Tillis submitted the request together.
 - Tillis also noted that the Senate's base draft will come out next Friday, so we have a call setup for July 12th to discuss if we got in or if we'll need to be working an amendment route in the Senate.
- In turn for REDC Members as we work strategy and putting the full court press on in preparation for the July 28th subcommittee markup, we'll be going to you for emails directly to offices and for action alerts. Stay tuned!

II. Telehealth

- As a reminder, the White House Domestic Policy Council meeting to discuss our idea of expanding telehealth coverage for essential health benefits within ACA plans is set for Wednesday, July 14.
- We have a prep call with the groups that will be joining us on Friday, July 9.
- The CONNECT for Health Act is gaining steam in Congress, which is the most comprehensive telehealth bill at the federal level.
 - The REDC Consortium endorsed this legislation, which is led by Telehealth Caucus members on both the House and Senate side.

- Led by Sen. Schatz (D-HI) and Rep. Thompson (D-CA) the legislation would make permanent the coverage and payment policies afforded by the Trump administration throughout pandemic.
 - Sen. Schatz wants to roll the plan into must-pass legislation this year; however, telehealth lobbyists so far have failed to get extensions into COVID relief packages given consistent concerns over how it could drive up health care costs and potentially invite fraud.
 - The Government Accountability Office (GAO) warned the Senate Finance Committee last month of potential fraud and higher spending. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) last year found a plan that would end the Medicare geographic restrictions for mental health care via telehealth would add \$1.65 billion in spending between 2021 and 2030.

III. ACA

- **State Health Groups Urge Congressional Spending Packages to Shore up the ACA**
 - A coalition of state health advocacy organization is urging the Biden administration to built out the ACA as part of its next spending bills.
 - The [letter](#) laid out a range of policy options for them to consider. Some of the options include:
 - The fully funding navigator programs that help people sign up for coverage, streamlining the enrollment process and making permanent more generous subsidies for a greater proportion of Americans.
- **CMS Extending Enrollment Window**
 - This fall, CMS is set to lengthen the ACA enrollment season by 30 days. This fall, the enrollment season will run between November 1 and January 15.
 - Additionally, the agency plans to eliminate the strict sign up window for American who earn under 150% of the federal poverty level. Those shoppers are now allowed to sign up each month.
 - CMS stated the policy could help those who lose their Medicaid coverage at the end of the public health emergency, when states are again allowed to remove people from the safety net program.
- **Beefing up the ACA Navigator Program**
 - The agency is proposing to hike Healthcare.gov insurers' user fees by a half-percentage point to fund expanded responsibilities for groups helping to enroll people in plans.
 - The navigators will receive a record \$80 million in the 2022 enrollment season.

We wish all of you a very Happy 4th of July weekend!

Allison & the Center Road Solutions Team