

Legislative Update -- February 2022

January 20th marked one year of the Biden-Harris Administration –

NHMA strongly advocates for Child Tax Credits, ACA, and Medicaid Expansion to cover more Americans with affordable health insurance. We also support increased climate change measures to reduce carbon emissions, improve air and water quality, and decrease lead in housing. We encourage Justice40 to provide funds to those communities most impacted.

NHMA applauds the efforts of the Biden Administration to continue distributing more home testing kits for free across the nation and sending out free N95 masks to all Americans to combat and prevent the spread of COVID-19. The recent surge in COVID-19 cases brought on by the Omicron variant has pushed hospitals to their limits, and NHMA has spent the last two years fighting for the best ways to combat and defeat this epidemic. The Administration has half a billion tests available to send out directly to homes and you can order tests from [COVIDTests.gov](https://www.COVIDTests.gov). They also focused on sending more tests to schools and providing more federal testing locations. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services also announced that Medicare will cover costs of at-home tests starting this spring. The Administration has sent out 100 million free N95 masks across the country. NHMA is extremely pleased with this news and will continue to work with the Administration to see that COVID-19 tests, vaccines, and medications are accessible to all.

This week NHMA joined mayors, small businesses, and nonprofits participating in the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit Day of Action calling all eligible recipients to go to [ChildTaxCredit.gov](https://www.ChildTaxCredit.gov).

NHMF receives grant from Rockefeller Foundation to provide Community Organization Grants in 2022 and is partnering with Congressional offices in Oakland (Rep. Lee), Chicago (Rep. Kelly, Rep. Garcia) and with Teach for America in Houston in providing COVID-19 protection books/speakers/social media on COVID-19 and vaccines aimed at grammar school students and parents -- for more information: www.NHMAFoundation.org

NHMA received a grant, the Hispanic Leadership Development Fellowship, from U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services to recruit Latinos up to 2 years after completion of a graduate school degree to work at HHS with health equity policy and programs lectures, stipends, housing, and travel to and from home.

Senate started this week with hearings to focus on legislative issues of importance to our communities who have suffered so much with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senate Finance Committee Hearing on Mental Health of Youth: Surgeon General Murthy policy recommendations:

1. Children should have access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care with health coverage; expansion of mental health workforce (clinical psychologists, school counselors, psychiatrists, coaches); funds for mental health at primary care practices, schools, telehealth from the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary Education Emergency Relief Fund.
2. Prevention – family focused programs to teach parents about challenges and resources.
3. Technology and Social media impact on mental health program.
4. Community engagement – fund our nonprofits and communities.

Senate HELP Committee on Health Equity and COVID-19 speakers' Policy Recommendations:

1. Data collection to include race, ethnicity, language, and more local data
2. Equitable vaccine roll-out
3. Increase ACA – affordable health care
4. Better wages and housing
5. Provide long-term follow-up care and monitoring for people diagnosed with COVID-19 or to those with symptoms including free care for those without health insurance
6. Provide specific research funding to understand and address the long-term physical and mental health consequences of COVID-19 in populations disproportionately impacted

SIGN ON LETTERS:

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing the planet today. NHMA has been a long supporter of combating climate change and climate justice. We signed on to a letter calling on lawmakers to swiftly approval of FY2022 appropriations to help in conservation and environmental protections for public health. We also once again called on the Senate to pass the core climate change elements of the Build Back Better Act so that we can really jumpstart efforts to improve conservation and public health.

As the battle over reproductive rights continues to be waged across the nation, NHMA stands with women and their right to make their own medical decisions. That is why we signed onto a letter in support of the Women’s Health Protection Act, S.1975. This bill would prohibit governmental restrictions on access to abortion services and can’t limit a provider's ability to prescribe certain drugs, offer abortion services via telemedicine, or immediately provide abortion services when the provider determines a delay risks the patient's health.

Two years on the country is still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and while we continue to combat it, there needs to be plans made to ensure we are not caught flatfooted should another pandemic arise. That’s why NHMA signed onto a letter calling for the support and passage of the Bolstering Infectious Outbreaks (BIO) Pandemic Workforce Act. This bill would establish a new student loan repayment program to help address financial barriers that prevent health care professionals from pursuing careers in bio-preparedness and infectious disease.

NHMA has long supported Medicaid and has worked to expand its reach to all those who can’t afford traditional healthcare. That is why we are a proud member of the Partnership 4 Medicaid coalition and we signed on a letter of support calling for to have all our Medicaid priorities addressed in the coming year by Congress. This includes among others closing the Medicaid coverage gap for Americans residing in states that have yet to expand Medicaid and still lack access to health insurance; investing in and improving access to Medicaid home-and community-based services (HCBS) and mental health services; permanently authorize the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP); and creating a permanent and sustainable Medicaid financing solution for Puerto Rico and other territories. We also called for passage of bipartisan legislation already introduced in Congress including the Helping MOMS Act (H.R.3345), the Stabilize Medicaid and CHIP Coverage Act (H.R. 1738), and the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Act (S. 2069 and H.R. 4323).

Alzheimer’s disease is one of the most debilitating diseases that not only has no cure but has little in the way of effective treatments. Hispanics are 1.5x more likely to get this disease than the general population. Recently there have been breakthroughs in the use of monoclonal antibodies as a treatment for Alzheimer’s. However, these treatments are very expensive and for many who would seek this treatment, their main source of health care is through Medicare and Medicaid. NHMA has signed on to a letter calling for CMS not to put onerous requirements on monoclonal antibody treatment for Alzheimer’s disease in order to pay for treatments and to support Alzheimer’s disease research and clinical trials.