

Legislative Update Jan newsletter (plus letters of support)

U.S. Supreme Court ruled yesterday that the vaccine or testing mandate from the Biden Administration couldn't go into effect but permitted a vaccine requirement for health care workers whose facilities receive Medicare or Medicaid funds. NHMA is very disappointed in this decision. We joined former OSHA officials, medical professionals, and public health experts who agree: **OSHA Can and Must Protect Workers from COVID-19**. OSHA's vaccine or test standard is an essential component of America's strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic by requiring more than 84 million private-sector workers to become fully vaccinated or submit to weekly testing. COVID-19 is the single greatest occupational health crisis for American workers since the creation of OSHA, claiming the lives of more than 820,000 Americans and continuing to infect more than 400,000 individuals each day. OSHA's vaccine or testing requirement will protect millions of workers and create safer communities by preventing the spread of COVID-19 on the job.

NHMA applauds the efforts of the Biden Administration to distribute more home testing kits for free across the nation and doubling its order of new antiviral medications to help combat 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 pandemic. With the announcement, the Administration will procure 500 million more tests which can be sent out directly to homes. The Administration also doubled its order of the Pfizer's oral COVID-19 antiviral treatment bringing the number to 20 million courses. NHMA is extremely pleased with this news and will continue to work with the Administration to see that COVID tests, vaccines and medications are accessible to all.

The National Hispanic Medical Association continues its call on the Senate to swiftly pass the Build Back Better Act so that it can be signed into law and get these vital programs to improve healthcare access, combat climate change and paid leave underway. Passage of this historic legislation will mark significant and long overdue investments that promote the health and well-being of Hispanic Families. Build Back Better will undoubtedly uplift the next generation of Hispanic Americans through opportunity.

NHMA continues its long support of Medicare Advantage and wants to continue seeing its fair implementation to help improve seniors' health through its comprehensive benefits and services. To that end we signed onto two letters to the CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure calling for Medicare Advantage to continue its work to help improve health equity. We signed a letter with the heads of the National Medical Association and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum calling for implementation of a stable rate and policy environment for Medicare Advantage in 2023. The second letter calls for new Medicare Advantage policies to be implemented in the coming year through the rules making process to ensure. This letter is signed onto by multiple organizations that support minority and underserved populations advancing health equity across Medicare Advantage.

One of the core principles of NHMA is access to healthcare and we believe that no person should be denied for any reason. We signed onto a letter to the Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra calling for him to immediately engage in notice and comment rulemaking to rescind the 2019 "Protecting Statutory Conscience Rights in Health Care; Delegations of Authority" rule (the 2019 Conscience Rule). This rule allows health care providers and others to impede and deny patients access to care. NHMA and its members would never deny access to care and we certainly do not believe that the federal government should give health care providers a reason to do so.

Finally, NHMA wrote an op-ed with the leaders of League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCOA) calling on greater efforts to the obesity epidemic in the Hispanic community. Published in English and Spanish on the Univision website, the op-ed calls for the passage of the bipartisan Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA) and have the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) modernize its outdated policies to include anti-obesity treatments. NHMA has been a leader on combatting obesity and is a member of the Obesity Care Action Network (OCAN) where we work to see legislative and administration solutions to getting more equitable health care coverage and access to anti-obesity medications and procedures.