



NHMA Legislative Update – October 2023

The national office continues to monitor federal and state legislative and regulatory changes and advocate for initiatives representing the interests of our 50,000 licensed Hispanic physicians in the United States. In addition, we maintain weekly communication with strategic national partners and coalitions to eliminate health disparities and improve the health of Hispanics in the United States.

White House and Administrative Activity

Government Funding. On September 30, President Biden signed a continuing resolution into law, avoiding a government shutdown with less than 24 hours to spare, for an additional 45 days until November 17. NHMA urges Congress to reach an agreement on the annual appropriations bills to avoid negative impact on people and families who rely on key health care programs.

ARPA-H Hispanic Health Innovations Symposium (Monday, September 18)

The National Hispanic Health Foundation (NHHF) partnered with the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) and nominated speakers for its inaugural Hispanic Health Innovations Symposium. NHMA and NHHF staff attended. Remarks were provided by Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, ARPA-H Director Dr. Renee Wegrzyn, and Marvin Figueroa, Director, Intergovernmental and External Affairs (IEA). The Symposium recognized the contributions of leaders shaping the future of healthcare for Hispanics and to chart a course for future engagement between government, industry, academia, venture capitalists, patients, and the Hispanic community. The event included two panels, with Dr. Elena Rios moderating a panel on “Patient and Provider Voices from the Hispanic Community: Shaping the Future”.

US Department of Health and Human Services First Latino Health Summit (Tuesday, September 26)

NHMA and NHHF Staff Elena Rios, MD, Guadalupe Pacheco, and Art Motta, and Board of Directors Sylvia Preciado, MS, Claudia Zamora, and Yvonne Rodriguez joined Secretary Xavier Becerra and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for its inaugural HHS Latino Health Summit. Senior HHS, Biden-Harris Administration, and Latino health leaders highlighted their work to improve equity and access to health care in the Latino community. Panels and workshops topics focused on health care access, mental health, reproductive health, federal grants and resources, and much more.

HHS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with both NHMA and NHHF to form two public-private partnerships to exchange information and ideas and work collaboratively in order to promote the health and wellbeing of the individuals and communities served by both. NHHF will also develop its Diversity in the Future Public Health Workforce project with CDC to increase Hispanic leaders for employment and participation in advisory committees of HHS.

USDA Food and Nutrition Security Webinar: Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month (Monday, September 18). NHMA Staff joined USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) brown bag webinar recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month. The event raised awareness among FNS staff about recent administrative actions on food and nutrition security and its impact among Hispanic/Latino communities. FNS staff learned more about the incredible work NHMA, the National Association of

Hispanic Nurses (NAHN), and UnidosUS are doing to support Hispanic/Latino communities across the country, including those eligible for federal nutrition assistance programs like WIC.

Congressional Activity

National Latino and Latina Physician Day Resolutions. Congressman Raul Ruiz, MD (D-CA-25), Congresswoman Yadira Caraveo, MD (D-CO-08) and Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar (R-FL-27) introduced legislation in the House ([H.Res.734](#)), with Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) introducing a Senate companion ([S.Res.389](#)), to designate October 1st as “National Latino and Latina Physician Day”. This is the first official national day of recognition for our Latino and Latina physicians providing health care to countless people each and every day across the country. NHMA was a leader in the effort along with the American Anesthesiology Association.

U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) Virtual Panel on Health Disparities in the Hispanic Community (Tuesday, October 3)

NHMA staff and physician leaders joined the GAO’s Hispanic Liaisons Group (HLG) for a virtual panel on Health Disparities in the Hispanic Community. Carla Vazquez Santos, MD, shared her experience and research in geriatric care including Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, Jorge Moreno, MD from Yale School of Medicine, shared latest research on obesity among Latinos, and Ricardo Correa, MD, from Cleveland Clinic, shared his experience in caring for Latinos with diabetes. This was the second meeting with GAO this year and we look forward to nominating other NHMA members to serving as experts for Congress policy development. Join NHMA at www.nhmad.org

Senate HELP Committee Advances Health Workforce Bill. Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Roger Marshall (R-KS) introduced new legislation, the *Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act*, which would address the workforce challenges of primary care physicians and nurses. NHMA submitted a Statement for the Record in support of this bill before committee consideration in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. The bill passed the committee by a 14 to 7 vote and advances to the Senate floor. Click [HERE](#) to see the full list of amendments and video of the hearing and [HERE](#) to read a summary of the bill.

House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health held a hearing titled “Examining Policies to Improve Seniors’ Access to Innovative Drugs, Medical Devices, and Technology.” This hearing examined legislative solutions to address problems such as the significant gaps between the FDA approval of innovative medical products, CMS coverage of these products, the need for more predictable coverage pathways for innovative medical products, and accountable timelines for coverage review and determinations. Such legislation included NHMA key policy priorities, H.R. 4818, the *Treat and Reduce Obesity Act* (TROA) of 2023, which would expand Medicare Part D coverage to include obesity medications and allow additional health care providers to offer Intensive Behavioral Therapy, and H.R. 2407, the *Nancy Gardner Sewell Medicare Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act*, which would allow for Medicare coverage and payment for FDA cleared or approved multi-cancer early detection screening tests.

Advocacy Letters, Comments & Statements

NHMA joined AMA and other specialty medical societies in submitting an amicus in the *Braidwood Management v. Becerra* matter in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit (Case No. 23-10326).

This case concerns a challenge to the ACA's requirement for preventive services at no cost to the patient that has been in place for more than a decade. NHMA strongly supports preventive education and services at no cost to increase access to healthcare and identify diseases at early stages to decrease costly healthcare procedures for patients with chronic diseases and their complications. The state has cross-appealed the lower court's decision.

NHMA sent a letter to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau in response to a Request for Information regarding how consumers pay for medical care and the benefits associated with using credit and deferred interest financing to expand access to health care in the Hispanic population.

NHMA signed a letter to U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra and Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) Dawn O'Connell urging HHS to alleviate the administrative burden on pharmacies serving rural and historically underserved populations by removing burdensome requirements for pharmacists to utilize the Health Partner Order Portal (HPOP) system and enable increased availability of COVID-19 therapeutics

NHMA signed a letter to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director of National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) Demetre Daskalakis urging the CDC provide clear, broad and simple guidance for the use of the new COVID-19 vaccines which address the currently circulating variants of this virus.

NHMA signed a letter to Reps. Lisa Blunt Rochester and Brian Fitzpatrick support of H.R. 4775, the *Helping Tobacco Users Quit Act*, which would ensure that all Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) enrollees have access to the full array of evidence-based tobacco cessation treatments, including all Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved medications. The bill would extend tobacco cessation treatments currently required for pregnant women in Medicaid – all seven FDA-approved cessation medications and individual, group, and phone-based cessation counseling – to all Medicaid and CHIP enrollees. Medicaid enrollees smoke at more than twice the rate of adults with private health insurance (23.9% to 10.5%), which increases their risk of cancer, heart disease, COPD, diabetes and other tobacco-caused diseases. Most tobacco users want to quit, and Medicaid and CHIP enrollees who use tobacco should have barrier-free access to the treatments that give them the best change to quit successfully and decrease their risk for the above diseases.

NHMA signed a letter to House of Representatives Leaderships and House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Leadership in support of Rep. Jimmy Gomez legislation to designate the Los Angeles U.S. Courthouse at 350 W. 1st Street in honor of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez. The Mendez's advocacy led to the landmark 1946 case that ended segregation in California schools and paved the way for the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

NHMA signed a letter to Reps. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick and Kat Cammack thanking them for introducing a resolution designating September 2023 as "National Cholesterol Education Month" and September 30 as "LDL-C Awareness Day." This legislation takes an important step to raise awareness about the importance of monitoring and controlling cholesterol levels and about the role that LDL-C, or "bad" cholesterol, can play in an individual's risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.