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Public Policy & Government Relations Update
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Introduction

Public Policy and Government Relations (PPGR) thanks you for your continued engagement with the Medicaid for US – New York campaign. This March PPGR Update focuses on our continued efforts at the state and federal levels. It also provides information about relevant developments. PPGR remains focused on ensuring that you the staff, our members and our provider network have the resources they need to be well and advance our model of care. March is the heart of state budget advocacy, but we maintain our focus on federal developments with a view towards influencing decisions on Medicaid and HIV funding.

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New York State Update

New York State leaders are negotiating a state budget that is due by April 1, 2026. Our intelligence suggests that the budget may not be finalized until after the due date. The following is a summary of the status of our priority issues as they currently stand during negotiations.

- Medicaid
  - No proposals to cut Medicaid in any proposal– [However, we are watching attempts to reduce funding outside of the budget through rate changes and other scenarios]
- Gender Affirming Care & Transgender Services
  - Senate and Assembly have proposed $8M in funding. Governor's budget is silent on this, but Amida Care is advocating for the full $8M funding for Gender Affirming Care.
  - The Senate proposes $250M increase in funding for the Lorena Borjas Trans Equity and Wellness Fund (TWEF).
- Community Health Care, Rate Increase
  - The Governor, Assembly and Senate propose an increase in funding. Senate's proposal, at $100M is closest to $300M ($150M state share) need expressed by community health centers to mitigate HR1 cuts.
  - Senate proposes that CHCs get paid fairly (when compared to other providers) for telehealth services

HR1 Implementation in New York

Medicaid Work Requirements

New York State has submitted a request to the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare services. ***The request is in line with Amida Care's position that people living with HIV should be exempt from the work requirements***. The status of the request is pending, and until guidance is provided by CMS preparations must continue for implementation of the work requirements that start January 1, 2026.

Essential Plan Changes

HR1 made changes that restrict access to health care for immigrants who have health insurance through the Affordable Care Act Health Exchanges such as New York State of Health (NYSOH). Many New Yorkers with lower incomes would no longer be eligible for most

ATTORNEY GENERAL JAMES WINS LAWSUIT CHALLENGING FEDERAL ATTACK ON TRANSGENDER HEALTH CARE

On March 19, New York Attorney General Letitia James released the following statement after a federal judge ruled from the bench that the U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary cannot threaten providers with an illegal "declaration" to baselessly limit access to health care for transgender young people:

"So much of the conversation around transgender health care has lost sight of the real people harmed by the federal government's attacks. Young people are losing access to life-saving treatment, families are being left in the dark, and medical providers are being threatened just for doing their jobs and following standards of care.

"Today's win breaks through the noise and gives some needed clarity to patients, families, and providers. Health care services for transgender young people remain legal, and the federal government cannot intimidate or punish the providers who offer them.

"*It is my duty and my privilege to stand with trans New Yorkers and their families. I will always fight for the LGBTQ+ community*."

In December, Attorney General James led a coalition of attorneys general and governors in a lawsuit challenging Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s baseless "declaration" against transgender health care, which claims that certain forms of transgender health care are "unsafe and ineffective" and threatens to punish any doctors, hospitals, and clinics that continue to provide it by excluding them from the federal Medicare and Medicaid programs. Doug Wirth will be sending a congratulatory letter to Attorney General James.

NYSOH plans. To mitigate some of the impact, New York State made the decision to end a program call the Essential Plan (EP) and revert to a program with even lower income eligibility called the Basic Health Option (BHO). The change preserves coverage for about 1.7 million New Yorkers, however 460,000 people will lose eligibility and risk becoming uninsured. This has been approved by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS).

Critical Considerations for people living with HIV (PLWH) and Medicaid populations

- The change does NOT affect existing Medicaid populations
- New York State's Uninsured Care Program's Aids Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) is an option for PLWH with higher incomes than the BHO and Medicaid limits.
    - ADAP will help these individuals to cover the premium costs of health insurance they purchase through NYSOH.
    - Immigrants and other PLWH could also be supported by these programs.

New York City Update –

Mayor Mamdani creates LGBTQIA office, with NYC's first out trans agency head in charge

Mayor Zohran Mamdani is establishing the first Mayor's Office for LGBTQIA+ affairs and appointing the first out trans person to lead a New York City office as director.

The city will create a central office solely focused on how agencies can benefit queer New Yorkers who are disproportionately more likely to suffer higher rates of homelessness, job insecurity and issues accessing healthcare.

Taylor Brown, who is currently working in the state Attorney General's office in its civil rights bureau and who assisted in a lawsuit launched against Nassau County and its ban on transgender women and girls from playing sports in county facilities will head the new office. She will be the highest-ranking trans person in New York City government.

Previously, Brown also worked for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and the American Civil Liberties Union, where she was a part of the legal team behind a landmark lawsuit for trans people looking to amend birth certificates in West Virginia.

The office will also be tasked with safeguarding sanctuary protections for queer New Yorkers and help LGBTQ+ people fleeing to the city because of oppression elsewhere. Read the NYC announcement here.

Amida Care is exploring the possibility of a meeting with Taylor Brown.

Federal Update

Federal HIV Funding

President Trump is expected to release his budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2027 by mid April 2026. Last year his administration proposed drastic cuts to drastic cuts to domestic and global HIV programs. We expect a similar proposal this year. Fortunately, Congress rejected the cuts this year and Amida Care is already engaged with AIDS United and other federal partners to work with Congress to prevent future cuts.

Iran War Funding and Impacts on Medicaid and other social support programs

Our Medicaid For US-NY Coalition advocacy www.m4usny.org is more important than ever. As Americans struggle to afford health care and their basic needs, President Trump is requesting that Congress provide $200B in funding to fund the unplanned an unpopular war with Iran. Republicans in Congress are looking at how to fulfill this request. Under consideration is using the same budgetary process, reconciliation, that was used by them last year to cut health care funding. Reconciliation is a budgetary process in the US Senate that allows a simple majority vote to pass budgetary changes—typically Senate votes need to be passed by 60% of Senators. This is significant because Republicans will need to account for how they will pay for the $200B in Iran War funding which they are requesting, they are likely to look at cutting social programs like Medicaid and food assistance again. Click this link for more info: *Congress eyes another round of big healthcare cuts*.

PPGR Advocacy

PPGR continues to be actively engaged in Advocacy. In March our focus has been on the state budget, however we continue to advocate for a fix to the health care cuts to Medicaid and other health care programs from the Federal level. We are also continuing to advocate for the LGBTQ community through our priorities.

CHCANY Lobby Day in Albany
On Wednesday March 4, Lyndel Urbano joined the CHCANY coalition up in Albany for legislative meetings including the offices of Senator Kristen Gonzalez, Senator Gustavo Rivera and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon.

Get Connected Radio Interview
On March 4, Joe Pressley did a radio interview with the podcast program “Get Connected” on Lite FM where Joe was able to put words on the damages of HR1 on our communities, as well as highlight our Medicaid for US – New York campaign. Listen to the interview here.

Amida Care Lobby Day in Albany
On Monday March 9 and Tuesday March 10, Doug Wirth, Lyndel Urbano and Casper Christiansen went to Albany for legislative visits. These visits included:

- Senator Jamaal Bailey
- Senator Kristen Gonzalez
- Assemblymember Tony Simone
- Assemblymember Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas
- Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal
- Health Committee Director Tony Kergaravat (Senator Gustavo Rivera)
- AIDS Institute Director Joe Kerwin

Takeaway:
Support was reiterated by the legislative offices and Amida Care with legislative offices offering support for issues we would need support on. We were able to get our budgetary asks across, urging the protection of SNPs and promote our Medicaid for US – NY campaign.

BronxNet TV Interview

On Wednesday March 11, Joe Pressley did an interview about the impacts of the HR1 bill, Governor Hochul's budget proposal, the state of HIV in the Bronx and across New York state and our Medicaid for US – New York campaign. This was also a great opportunity to highlight the importance of the work that Amida Care does. You can watch the interview here.

Crain's New York

Op-Ed: New York must protect its health care job engine
by Doug Wirth March 24, 2026
https://www.crainsnewyork.com/op-ed/op-ed-new-york-must-protect-its-health-care-job-engine/

"*After Congress passed HR1 last year, Gov. Kathy Hochul's office outlined the bill's projected impact on New York: up to 1.7 million New Yorkers at risk of losing coverage; more than 60,000 health care and related jobs potentially eliminated; and an estimated $14 billion reduction in statewide economic activity. Hospitals could face billions in lost revenue as uncompensated care rises.*
Community health centers would also be hit hard. The Community Health Care Association of New York State estimates a direct loss of $300 million to the state's community health centers, resulting in nearly 2,000 layoffs. These centers provide care to one in eight New Yorkers regardless of their ability to pay. When they get more vulnerable, access shrinks — particularly in medically underserved communities.

For business leaders, these figures should set off alarm bells".

Rockland County Pride Center Presentation

On Wednesday March 11, Joe Pressley, alongside Anthony Feliciano from Housing Works went up to the Rockland County Pride Center to give a presentation about our Medicaid for US – New York campaign and engaged in conversation with local advocates about how we can support them and connect them to the campaign. Joe went back on March 25 to share drafts of an Op-Ed and flyer for their review and usage in their advocacy.

AIDS Watch in Washington D.C.

On March 18, Lyndel Urbano went to AIDS Watch in Washington D.C. for their day of legislative meetings on the hill. Amida Care joined Callen Lorde, GLAMA and Housing works. He brought our Medicaid for US – New York messaging to the meetings, asking members to fix the HR1 health care cuts and support HIV funding. The message was shared with many offices including four of the seven New York Representatives who voted for HR1 – Rep. Nicole Malliotakis, Mike Lawler, Nick Langworthy and Elise Stefanik.

Trans Wellness and Equity Fund Convening in Albany

On March 23 – 24, Joe Pressley and Lyndel Urbano joined New Pride Agenda for their inaugural Transgender Wellness and Equity Fund Convening in Albany, NY. The convening focused on the importance for supporting access to supportive services and care for transgender New Yorkers though a $10M fund. Senator Eric Bottcher and Assembly Member Harry Bronson opened the event. Speakers emphasized the need for New York to increase support for trans led and serving organization.

Get Engaged –

Make sure you visit our campaign website www.m4usny.org and take action by sending letters and utilizing the social media kit. ***Please also remember to keep filling out postcards here at our offices and bring some home for family and friends to fill out (If you are unable to pay for postage, please bring them to us and we will send them out!)***.

PPGR Round Up

As we are continuing to approach the April 1 New York State budget deadline, PPGR continues to be present in Albany and staying vigilant to ensure that Amida Care's budget priorities are heard and influence the budgetary outcomes. We also invite you to join us in our ongoing Medicaid for US-NY advocacy to push Congress to fix the damaging HR1 Health Care Cuts.

Additional Readings:

Hochul wins federal approval to undo Essential Plan expansion

Governor Hochul announced that New York received final approval from the Trump administration to reverse the state's expansion of the Essential Plan. The change will significantly reduce enrollment in the public insurance program and help the state offset federal funding cuts.

The approval from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will shrink enrollment in the Essential Plan from 1.7 million to 1.3 million individuals and allow the state to tap into a nearly $9 billion trust fund to pay for coverage. Nearly 450,000 people currently enrolled in the Essential Plan will lose access to coverage. State officials describe the change as necessary and attribute the coverage losses to funding cuts caused by HR1. Read the full article here.

Interfaith Alliance Action Alert "Tell Your Senators: Oppose the SAVE America Act (S.1383)"

The Interfaith Alliance has released an Action Alert in opposition of the SAVE America Act which would impose new documentary proof-of-citizenship requirements for voter registration, forcing Americans to produce documents such as a birth certificate or passport in order to vote.

When registering to vote, Americans are already required to verify their eligibility. But this bill would impose unnecessary barriers to the registration process, requiring voters to provide documentation that many don't have. More than 21 million Americans are unable to access the additional documents that would be required to register to vote under these bills. People of color, married people who have changed their names, as well as young and elderly people are more likely to have difficulty in accessing these documents.

Under this bill, most voters wouldn't be able to register to vote with their driver's license alone, because licenses generally do not indicate citizenship. Instead, they would need another less common form of documentation, like a U.S. passport or birth certificate. The SAVE America Act and the SAVE Act could affect registered voters too. Any time somebody updates their registration, if they change their address or political party, they would need to provide these documents.

You can find the action alert here.

Federal Scientists Run Out by Trump Talk About the Work Left Undone

in President Donald Trump's second term, the NIH has seen an exodus of scientists like Marc Ernstoff, Philip Stewart, Sylvia Chou and Alexa Romberg. Federal data shows the NIH lost about 4,400 people — more than 20% of its workforce. Scientists say the departures harm the U.S.' ability to respond to disease outbreaks, develop treatments for chronic illnesses, and confront the nation's most pressing public health problems. Read the full article here to hear their stories and reason why they chose to leave.

Trump fires Kristi Noem as homeland security secretary

President Donald Trump fired Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem on Thursday March 5, making her the first Cabinet secretary to leave her post and capping off a tumultuous year in which she oversaw his increasingly unpopular mass deportation agenda. Alongside the announcement of Noem's ouster, Trump said he would tap Senator Markwayne Mullin, (R-Oklahoma) to replace her and he will take over DHS at the end of the month. Read the full article here.

Billionaire wealth jumps three times faster in 2025 to highest peak ever, sparking dangerous political inequality

Billionaire wealth jumped by over 16 per cent in 2025, three times faster than the past five-year average, to $18.3 trillion – its highest level in history, according to a new Oxfam report.
Billionaire wealth has increased by 81 per cent since 2020. This comes as one in four people don't regularly have enough to eat and nearly half the world's population live in poverty. The surge in billionaire wealth coincides with the Trump administration pursuing a pro-billionaire agenda. It has slashed taxes for the super-rich, undermined global efforts to tax large corporations, reversed attempts to address monopoly power and contributed to the growth of AI-related stocks that have provided a boon to super-rich investors world-wide. Read the full article here. Read the Oxfam Analysis here.

Albany Co. legislature votes to limit cooperation with ICE

Albany County agencies will not cooperate with or aid ICE operations in the county following a vote by the county legislature Monday night.
A resolution passed 29-9, along party lines, to keep agencies in Albany County — namely, the Albany County Sheriff's office — from helping to carry out ICE, Department of Homeland Security or Border Patrol operations in the county. The resolution also prohibits county agencies from allowing ICE to use "any Albany County property as detention facilities for civil immigration enforcement" or "staging areas for ICE or Border Patrol operations". Read the full article here. We have heard that other counties are exploring similar measures.

KFF Analysis

Constrained Budgets Lead States to Restrict HIV Drug Access Through Ryan White

States are facing constrained budgets, putting pressure on HIV care and prevention programs, including the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program. Ryan White, the nation's HIV safety-net, is funded each year through discretionary federal appropriations, state dollars, and other sources. However, funding does not necessarily match the number of people who need support or the cost of services.

The largest component of Ryan White provides grants to states, including for their AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs), which provide HIV treatment and insurance assistance for people with HIV. Read the full KFF analysis here.

A Look at the Intersection of SNAP and Medicaid as States Implement Medicaid Work Requirements

On July 4, President Trump signed the 2025 reconciliation law that makes significant changes to the Medicaid program, including new requirements for states to implement work requirements. Starting January 1, 2027, states must condition Medicaid eligibility on meeting work requirements for individuals enrolled through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) Medicaid expansion pathway and through certain state waivers. To ease the burden on individuals, the law directs states to use available information "where possible" to verify compliance with Medicaid work activities or exemption status, without requiring additional documentation from individuals. Read the full KFF analysis here.

KFF Examines Recent Trends in Medicaid Outpatient Prescription Drugs and Spending

A new KFF issue brief describes recent trends in the number of Medicaid outpatient prescriptions and spending on those drugs, and also examines the implications of recent federal policy actions. The analysis finds that net spending after rebates on Medicaid prescription drugs has grown substantially in recent years, rising by 46% from $31 billion in FY 2019 to $46 billion in FY 2024, due in part to high-cost drugs like GLP-1s and gene therapies. Both net spending per prescription and net spending per enrollee also grew over the period, while the number of prescriptions paid for by Medicaid only grew slightly over that period. Read the full KFF analysis here.