



# January 2026 Public Policy & Government Relations Update Volume 2: Issue 1

## Introduction

Public Policy and Government Relations (PPGR) is happy to provide our first update for 2026. This year promises to be another busy year in public policy. This edition overviews the current policy environment and describes our vision for how we intend to influence the complex issues that we face.

In 2026, New York State will set its first full annual budget that accounts for health care and Medicaid cuts caused by HR1. At the same time federal instability continues. At the time of writing, the federal government is poised to shut down because Congress has not passed a full budget yet. In addition, attacks on healthcare access for transgender people are ongoing.

Despite these challenges, in 2026 we aim to create opportunities for change. This year is an election year with statewide and federal elections. All members of Congress are up for election, as is the Governor and all members of the New York State legislature. This is the perfect moment to raise our voices to protect Medicaid here in New York, and to call on our elected leaders to fix the HR1 cuts to health care and Medicaid.

In 2026 PPGR will continue to build on the Medicaid for US – New York campaign and meet with state level decision makers to prevent and minimize the harmful impacts of HR1 rate cuts.

We ask you to join us in these efforts to protect our plan, provider network, and above all our members’ access to healthcare. Continue your day-to-day efforts but remember to vote and join us when we share opportunities for action.

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## Recap of PPGR Priorities

The overriding concern of PPGR is to safeguard the interests of Amida Care’s members, staff and provider network. PPGR is certain that the SNP Model is more critical at this moment, because we reach folk who are most affected by HIV. Amida Care staff work with our members and provider networks to ensure the best access to care. We believe that New York cannot afford to degrade our work through rate cuts especially when confronting HR1 Medicaid cuts along with the ongoing federal funding instability.

PPGR has three overriding priorities for 2026.

- Prevent rate cuts and advance measures that protect our members and provider networks
- Lead efforts to protect TGNB services and access to care
- Set up an environment that would, in the future, allow for SNPs to play a greater role in serving more populations that are placed at elevated risk for HIV

To realize these priorities, PPGR is deploying a strategy that educates the public and our elected officials about the value of Amida Care for the state’s effort to end the HIV epidemic. This strategy will include expanding the Medicaid for US-NY campaign, or leadership of the HIV Medicaid Coalition, a media strategy, advocacy and active engagement with coalitions at the state and federal level.

## Federal Policy Landscape

### *Federal Budget for HIV and Health Care*

The United States Congress is yet to pass a federal budget for the current fiscal year (2025-2026). At the time of writing the federal government is likely to face a partial shut-down at midnight tonight (January 30, 2026). Unlike during the shutdown last year, there appears to be a bi-partisan agreement in the U.S. Senate on how to fund government until September 2026.

Congress needs to pass 12 appropriations (*budget*) bills to fund the federal government. Six of these bills are yet to pass, including the bill that funds federal health care programs such as Medicaid and HIV related support services. The bills are held up because of Senate disagreement about how to address funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS is the federal department that oversees Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Democratic Senators are leading calls for DHS to be reformed to address the abusive practices of ICE across the country, including the two recent killings of US citizens by ICE agents in Minnesota. [\(Learn more about this in the ACLU Townhall summary in the additional reading section\)](#)

Last night Senate Democrats and President Trump reached agreement to separate the DHS funding from the rest of the appropriations bills. Under this agreement, the bills that fund Medicaid, HIV and other health care programs will be funded until September 2026. Congress will have an additional two weeks to consider the DHS funding separately.

If passed, the appropriations bills will fully fund domestic HIV related programs such as Ryan White, housing assistance for people living with HIV (HOPWA) and CDC HIV prevention. Full

funding would signify that Congress rejected efforts to cut over \$2 billion in funding for essential domestic HIV services.

## SAMSHA

In January 2026, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) cut a broad spectrum of behavioral health services contracts without prior notice. While the cuts were restored the next day, the random cuts to existing contracts are indicative of ongoing federal funding instability. ([See additional reading for more detail](#))

## *Gender Affirming Care Under Attack*

PPGR will provide comments on two federal rules about gender affirming care for youth. In December 2025, the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) issued two rules that would restrict access to health care for transgender and gender non-conforming youth. The rules aim to prohibit Medicaid and Medicare payment for gender affirming care for youth. One rule is of particular concern because it would prohibit hospitals that provide these services from participating in Medicaid and Medicare. If you are a provider or otherwise interested in commenting on the rule, Human Rights Campaign and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have created tools to use for submitting comments. Comments are due by February 17, 2026. ([Links are provided in the additional reading section](#)). Amida Care is in close communication with advocates and government officials on this issue.

## **New York State Budget Landscape**

In January 2026, Governor Kathy Hochul released her 2027 executive budget. The budget included proposals to address a \$10.3B decrease in federal funding to New York State for education, public safety and health. Medicaid is expected to see a \$3B increase in costs because of the loss of federal funding.

The governor's *initial* budget does not include any cuts to Medicaid. The budget offsets the \$3B Medicaid federal funding cut with higher revenue and greater than expected savings within the Medicaid program from changes to the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP).

It is critical to note that ongoing federal instability creates an uncertain environment, and much can change between now and when the state budget is enacted before April 1, 2026. If any of the state's calculations change, there is the real possibility that the state will have to look to plan rate reductions as a measure to control the Medicaid costs. The risk of rate cuts will grow next year (*April 2027 – March 2028*) as the Medicaid program comes under further stress resulting from the HR1 federal actions and cuts. To further complicate matters, Medicaid rate cuts are not always tied to the budget but can and have been applied retroactively.

PPGR alongside Finance and our Executive Team will be persistent in our ongoing advocacy to push back against any cuts to SNP rates.

## Election Year

2026 is an important election year. All seats in the New York State legislature and Congress are up for election. In addition, New York will have an election for Governor. While these elections take place in November, please remember to register to vote as soon as you can to ensure that you do not miss this opportunity to set the policy direction of our state and country. In New York State, you can use this link to register: <https://elections.ny.gov/register-vote>.

If you live in New York City please also be aware that there are two special elections for Assembly seats next week, Tuesday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026. Find out where to vote by using this link: <https://www.vote.nyc/elections>.

### Special Election:

- 47<sup>th</sup> Senate District & 74<sup>th</sup> Assembly District in Manhattan – This is an election for the open seat of former Sen. Brad Hoyman-Sigal who is now Manhattan Borough President.
- 36<sup>th</sup> Assembly District in Queens – This election is for the open seat in Astoria Queens that was previously held by former Assembly Member Mamdani, who is now New York City mayor.

## Election Information

*Special Election - February 3, 2026*



**February 3, 2026 Special Elections for the: 47<sup>th</sup> Senate District & 74<sup>th</sup> Assembly District in Manhattan, and the 36<sup>th</sup> Assembly District in Queens. See extended hours below:**

### [Early Voting Wait Time Map](#)

- **Election Day is Tuesday, February 3, 2026. Polls are open from 6am to 9pm.**
- **Early Voting Period is January 24, 2026 – February 1, 2026.**

Early Voting Dates	Early Voting Hours
Saturday, January 24, 2026	9AM to 5PM
Sunday, January 25, 2026	Suspended by Executive Order
Monday, January 26, 2026	Suspended by Executive Order

<b>Tuesday, January 27, 2026</b>	<b>10AM to 8PM</b>
<b>Wednesday, January 28, 2026</b>	<b>10AM to 8PM</b>
<b>Thursday, January 29, 2026</b>	<b>9AM to 6PM</b>
<b>Friday, January 30, 2026</b>	<b>8AM to 6PM</b>
<b>Saturday, January 31, 2026</b>	<b>9AM to 6PM</b>
<b>Sunday, February 1, 2026</b>	<b>9AM to 6PM</b>

### Early Voting Poll Site List

- [Poll Site List February Special 2026 Early Voting - Manhattan](#)
- [Poll Site List February Special 2026 Early Voting - Queens](#)

### Opportunities for Action

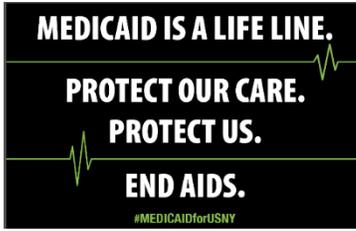
#### *Medicaid For US – New York Campaign*

To recap, the **Medicaid For US -New York** campaign is a collaborative campaign spearheaded by Amida Care in partnership with 18 other organizations. The campaign is directed at New York’s House of Representatives and United States Senate delegation, with a special focus on the seven members of the Congressional delegation who voted YES for the HR1 bill, thus voting for cuts to Medicaid and healthcare funding.

Thank you to those of you who were able to join us in taking action last year! Stay tuned for information about more rallies and actions as the weather warms up. In the meantime, use the QR Code below to continue to send messages to Congress. If you are in the office, please take a minute to fill out and send a postcard. The postcards are by the reception desk on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor. Please fill them out and take some home for your loved ones, if you can. Bring them back and we will take it from there.



[Medicaid for US-NY Action Link 1](#)



*Letter from 36 HIV and Medicaid Groups to Senator Schumer:*

Alongside 35 organizations from across New York State, Amida Care is calling on Senator Chuck Schumer to take immediate action to protect Medicaid and extend Affordable Care Act subsidies. A letter was sent to his office and the office responded immediately to acknowledge the communication and that the Senator's office shares the concerns expressed.

 **Amida Care**  
January 22 at 3:45 PM · 🌐

Medicaid is the foundation of HIV care in New York.

Alongside 35 organizations across the state, Amida Care is calling on [Senator Chuck Schumer](#) to take immediate action to protect Medicaid and extend Affordable Care Act (ACA) subsidies.

Federal cuts to Medicaid and the expiration of ACA subsidies threaten coverage for millions, weaken our health care infrastructure, and put people living with HIV at risk.

Health care access can't wait: we need bold leadership now.

Read our letter to Senator Schumer: <https://tinyurl.com/fe6k37af>



**SENATOR SCHUMER:**

**PROTECT MEDICAID.**

**PROTECT US.**

**EXTEND ACA SUBSIDIES.**



Link to the letter: <https://www.amidacareny.org/wp-content/uploads/Press-Release-on-Schumer-Letter-v4.docx.pdf>

## PPGR Round Up

PPGR is committed to protecting our plan, our provider network and the people we serve. Despite the challenges outlined in this update, we are committed to maximizing the opportunities for action.

Our actions to date are having an impact, for example Rep Mike Lawler, who voted for the HR1 Medicaid cuts, has more recently been vocal about the need to protect Medicaid.

In 2026 we see opportunities to create change. Now is the perfect moment to raise our voices to protect Medicaid here in New York, and to call on our elected leaders to fix the HR1 cuts to health care and Medicaid.

PPGR will continue to build on the Medicaid for US – New York campaign and meet with state level decision makers to prevent and minimize the harmful impacts of HR1 rate cuts. We ask you to join us in these efforts by continuing to make the Amida Care model of care work. Also, remember to vote and join us when we share opportunities for action.

## Additional Reading

### *[Trump Strikes deal with Democrats in government funding fight:](#)*

President Donald Trump and Senate Democrats struck a deal Thursday January 29<sup>th</sup> to avert a [prolonged shutdown](#) for most of the federal government, according to Trump and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer's office.

The agreement would fund all of the government except for the Department of Homeland Security through September. DHS would operate on a two-week stopgap bill, according to five sources familiar with the agreement, in order to buy time to negotiate changes sought by Democrats following public outrage over the DHS killings of [two U.S. citizens](#) in Minneapolis. Read the full article [here](#).

### *[ACLU Town Hall Concerning ICE Activities:](#)*

*Wednesday January 21<sup>st</sup>* The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) held a virtual town hall to address the ongoing actions by ICE in Minnesota and to address concerns and actions being taken by ACLU to combat these raids.

ACLU assured all on the call that they are actively working on litigation and have been doing so since November 2025. ACLU has since then filed over 200 legal actions, where 139 of them are lawsuits with a 70% success rate (court orders giving ACLU a win, court orders giving temporary blocks on challenged policies and in some cases a forfeit by the federal administration), as well as two cases against Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem for the use of force at protests in the state of Minnesota. Additionally, they have a case in the Supreme Court currently to protect birthright citizenship.

ACLU also shared that they have successfully challenged various cases of detainment via their litigations and helped release individuals.

ACLU also shared that they have seen states and municipalities react and implement protection laws due to the actions of the federal administration with a recording to date of 90 protection laws. Additionally, ACLU also offers “[Know Your Rights](#)” trainings and over 180,000 people have joined their “[People Power](#)” program which is a portal for resources and network for offline activism.

#### Gender Affirming Care Regulations:

The federal government has proposed two regulations that try to restrict access to health care for trans youth. **We have the opportunity to submit comments on these regulations until 2/17/2026.** You can find more information about these regulations at these links: [Hospital Conditions of Participation](#) and [Funding Restrictions](#). The [Human Rights Campaign’s comment portal can be accessed here](#), and the [ACLU sign-on letter here](#).

#### SAMHSA Funding Cuts:

On Wednesday January 14<sup>th</sup>, US health officials reversed course and began reinstating nearly [\\$2B in cuts to mental health and substance use programs](#) on Wednesday night, one day after they unexpectedly announced the immediate shutdown of programs. The reversal is a blow to the agenda of Robert F Kennedy Jr, the secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services, who has made aggressive and legally contested cuts to health agencies in the first year of the [Trump administration](#) and has proposed folding the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) into a new agency he would call the Administration for a Healthy America (AHA). There was [immediate outcry](#) about the effects of shutting down vital programs amounting to one-quarter of the budget of SAMHSA. The cuts would have affected overdose prevention and reversal, mental health and substance use support for children, mental health training and support for first responders, support for pregnant and postpartum women, and recovery support programs. Read the full article [here](#).

#### Americans think Republicans are too obsessed with trans people:

Most Americans believe that it’s a “problem” that Republicans are transphobic. A new YouGov poll asked Americans whether they thought that certain issues were a “problem” for either party. 44% said that transphobia was “a major problem” among Republicans, and another 24% said they thought it was “a minor problem.” Only 32% of respondents said it wasn’t a problem. Transphobia was the second most likely issue to be labeled a problem by respondents, after “hostility toward immigrants.” “Tolerance of political violence,” “conspiracy thinking,” “white supremacy,” “homophobia,” and “fascism” followed closely behind. 40% of respondents said that “transgender ideology” was “a major problem” for Republicans, and another 20% said it was “a minor problem.” 41% said that they didn’t think it was a problem at all for Republicans. Read the full article [here](#).

*Democratic-led US states sue over HHS grant conditions targeting transgender people:*

On Tuesday January 13<sup>th</sup>, Twelve Democratic state attorneys general sued on Tuesday seeking to block the Trump administration from withholding hundreds of billions of dollars in funding from them, hospitals and universities unless they comply with new conditions they say would force them to discriminate against transgender Americans.

The state attorney generals, including from New York and California, in the lawsuit, challenged conditions U.S. health agencies imposed on grants after Republican President Donald Trump signed an executive order last year instructing them to end the funding of "gender ideology." The suit was filed in federal court in Providence, Rhode Island. The order directed the government to recognize only two sexes - male and female - and sought to undo what it described as the "misapplication" of laws prohibiting sex discrimination to protect transgender people by the administration of Democratic President Joe Biden. Read the full article [here](#).

*Medicaid Expansion Increases Access to HIV Prevention Medication for High-Risk Populations:*

Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) significantly increased the number of people at risk of HIV diagnosis who were prescribed preexposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a preventative medication taken in pill or injectable form, according to Rutgers Health-led research.

The study, published in Health Affairs, analyzed PrEP prescription data from all 50 states and Washington, D.C., between 2012 and 2023.

Researchers found rates of PrEP prescribing increased overall and significantly increased relative to the number of new HIV diagnoses across all demographic groups, potentially because of overall increases in PrEP access and decreases in HIV diagnoses. Gains in access to PrEP, though, were greater for white populations compared to Black, Hispanic and Latino populations. Read the full study [here](#).

*Health Dept. Freezes \$10 Billion in Funding to 5 Democratic States:*

The Trump administration on Tuesday froze \$10 billion in funding for childcare subsidies, social services and cash support for low-income families in five states controlled by Democrats, claiming without evidence widespread fraud throughout those states after a major welfare fraud scheme in one of them.

Minnesota, New York, California, Illinois and Colorado will be cut off from around \$7.3 billion in funding for the [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#) program, which provides cash assistance to households with children, the Department of Health and Human Services announced. The five states will also lose access to nearly \$2.4 billion for the Child Care and Development Fund, which supports child care for working parents, and around \$870 million for [social services grants](#) that mostly benefit children at risk. Read the full article [here](#).