COVID-19: Federal Government Response

May 12: H.R. 6800, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, was introduced in the United States House of Representatives. This is the fifth legislative bill to be introduced to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill includes additional funds for state and local governments to pay essential workers during the coronavirus pandemic. It also includes provisions for additional stimulus payments to Americans, more funding for vaccines and treatments, and health coverage for people that have been left unemployed and without health insurance. A number of the provisions included are consistent with Academy-driven policy recommendations during COVID-19 such as:

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
  - $2.1 billion to support federal, state, and local public health agencies to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus, including:
    - $2 billion for State, Local, Territorial, and Tribal Public Health Departments
    - $130 million for public health data surveillance and analytics infrastructure modernization

- **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**
  - **Medicaid**: Increases Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) payments to state Medicaid programs by a total of 14 percentage points starting July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021

- **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**
$4.745 billion to expand COVID-19-related research on the NIH campus and at academic institutions across the country and to support the shutdown and startup costs of biomedical research laboratories nationwide

- **Private Insurance**
  - Provides for a two-month open enrollment period to allow individuals who are uninsured, for whatever reason, to enroll in coverage. Currently, Americans can only enroll in an Affordable Care Act (ACA) plan during open enrollment period, or because of a qualifying life event if they were previously insured

- **Public Health**
  - Testing and Testing Infrastructure Improvements
    - Requires the Secretary of HHS to update the COVID-19 strategic testing plan required under the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act no later than June 15, 2020.
    - Authorizes $6 billion for public health departments to expand workforce, improve laboratory systems, health information systems, disease surveillance, and contact tracing capacity to account for the unprecedented spread of COVID-19
    - Authorizes $1 billion for CDC to expand and improve their core public health infrastructure and activities in order to address unmet and emerging public health needs

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**
  - $3 billion to increase mental health support during this challenging time, to support substance abuse treatment, and to offer increased outreach

A summary of the bill can be found [here](#). On May 15th, the House of Representatives passed the bill 208-199. It is unclear if the Senate will take up this bill or introduce one of their own.

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**ACADEMY IN ACTION**

**April 24:** The Academy, along with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and other health care organizations, signed on to an *amicus brief to the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit* challenging the state of Tennessee’s efforts to ban abortions during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more](#). And on **April 10th**, the Academy signed on to an *amicus brief* along with the same organizations challenging the state of Oklahoma's efforts to ban abortions during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more](#).

**April 30:** The Academy released a [position statement on the importance of immunizations](#) to eliminate vaccine-preventable diseases during the World Health Organization's World Immunization Week. [Read more](#).

**April 30:** The Academy sent a letter to House and Senate leaders with recommendations on further actions that Congress should take in order to address the coronavirus pandemic. Academy staff collated, synthesized, and summarized input and recommendations from our 24
Expert Panels under 3 major themes in the letter: (1) protect our most vulnerable populations, (2) support nurses and healthcare providers, and (3) increase access, scale, speed and accuracy of testing. Read the full letter.

**May 4**: The Academy signed onto a letter with other healthcare organizations urging Members of Congress to support $10 million in supplemental funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for infant and young child feeding in emergencies in the next COVID-19 relief package. This $10 million in funding would provide immediate trauma-informed infant and young child feeding relief for these families and communities.

**May 13**: The Academy signed on to an amicus brief, along with other health care organizations, deans, chairs, and scholars, to the United States Supreme Court urging the Court to protect the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The brief noted that if the individual mandate is found unconstitutional, it should be severed from the rest of the law instead of repealing the ACA in its entirety. Repealing the ACA completely would have a devastating impact on Americans and the American healthcare system. Read more.

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**FELLOW OPPORTUNITIES**

**June 19th Application Deadline: Johnson & Johnson: Maternal Health Quickfire Challenge**

- With up to $200,000 in grant funding being awarded, the goal of this challenge is to discover solutions to help mothers survive and prevent adverse consequences from pregnancy and childbirth. Submissions must be actionable, measurable, filling a current data gap, sustainable, and/or scalable. Learn more.

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**District Digest**

**Government Accountability Office (GAO)**

  - The GAO conducted a study analyzing trends in maternal mortality between 2007 and 2016 in the United States. The report describes the trends they found along with the Department of Health and Human Services funding efforts to reduce pregnancy-related deaths.
National Academy of Medicine (NAM)

- Workshop Proceedings: Building the Workforce We Need for People with Serious Illness
  - This publication summarizes the presentations and discussions from the workshop held on November 7, 2019 relating to workforce challenges in meeting the needs of people with chronic and serious illnesses.

From the President's Desk

April 30: Proclamation on National Mental Health Awareness Month
May 6: Proclamation on National Nurses Day
May 15: New Members of Coronavirus Task Force Announced

- The new members include Sonny Perdue, Secretary of Agriculture, Gene Scalia, Secretary of Labor, Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Peter Marks, Food and Drug Administration Director of the Center for Biologics Evaluation Research, and Thomas Engels, Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration.

Around the Administration

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Please continue to check the website created by the CDC to provide day-to-day updates on the coronavirus pandemic in the United States.
- The CDC Coping with Stress page has mental health resources and tips for helping yourself as well as your families and communities.

From the Federal Register

Final Rule

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS): Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Interoperability and Patient Access for Medicare Advantage Organization and Medicaid Managed Plans, State Medicaid Agencies, CHIP Agencies and CHIP Managed Care Entities, Issuers of Qualified Health Plans on the Federally-Facilitated Exchanges, and Health Care Providers
  - This final rule is intended to move the health care ecosystem in the direction of interoperability as well as incorporate provisions from the 21st Century Cures Act and Executive Order 13813 to improve quality and accessibility of information that
Americans need to make informed care decisions, including data about health care prices and outcomes, while minimizing reporting burdens on affected health care providers and payers. These regulations are effective June 30, 2020.

Congressional Hearings

Based on previous positions taken by the Academy, the following scan is meant for informational purposes and does not directly translate to Academy endorsement. Links provided allow you to watch the recordings and read witness testimony.

House Energy & Commerce

- April 22: Teleconference Forum with Food and Drug Commissioner Stephen Hahn for a Briefing and Discussion on the Agency's Ongoing Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic
- April 30: Teleconference Forum with National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins on the Ongoing Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic
- May 1: Teleconference Forum with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Racial Disparities in Health Outcomes for COVID-19 Patients
- May 4: Teleconference Forum with Admiral Brett P. Giroir, Assistant Secretary of Health at the Department of Health and Human Services, on the Administration's COVID-19 Testing Efforts
- May 8: Teleconference Forum on COVID-19 Testing, Contact Tracing, and Surveillance
- May 14: Protecting Scientific Integrity in the COVID-19 Response

Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP)

- May 12: COVID-19: Safely Getting Back to Work and Back to School

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