

State Update

Did You Know?

OPCA and community health centers enjoyed successes on numerous priorities in the 2021 legislative session – many of which will improve access to health care for Oregonians. Here are a few highlights

- ✓ HB 3352 Cover All People,
- ✓ HB 2508 Telehealth Payment Parity,
- ✓ HB 2528 Licensing Dental Therapists,
- ✓ HB 2591 Expanding the School-Based Health Center Program, and
- ✓ HB 2969 Improving oral health in schools

Additionally:

- Lawmakers passed the largest state budget in Oregon’s history
- OPCA’s policy team tracked 398 bills
- OHA’s Legislatively Approved Budget saw a 12% increase
- Behavioral Health Regional Development Innovation (\$130M)

State of Emergency Ends, Masks Remain

On June 25, Governor Brown rescinded all remaining COVID-19 restrictions which had been in place since March 2020. However, as the threat from delta variant of COVID-19 continues to rise Governor Brown [directed](#) the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to create a rule requiring masks for anyone in an indoor school setting this fall. Once the rule is created, it will also affect summer programming, according to ODE. Gov. Brown also [issued guidance](#) for state agencies which was effective July 30. Workers for state agencies will be required to wear face masks in any indoor workspace, as will visitors to those agencies.

State Considers Vaccine Mandate for Health Care Workers

A 1989 law forbids Oregon employers from requiring vaccinations as a condition of employment for licensed or certified health care workers. However, pressure is mounting on state lawmakers and the Governor to take action as COVID-19 cases continue to increase across the country due to the delta variant. The Governor’s office has said they are examining the actions taken in California, New York City, and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Two state lawmakers, Lisa Reynolds and Maxine Dexter, both doctors and the Oregon Health Care Association have publicly endorsed changing the law to allow health care employers to mandate vaccines. Absent state action, three health systems have [announced](#) they will require employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19. We expect the Governor to make an announcement in the coming days, though it is not clear what she will decide.

Regulatory

340B

The first-ever comprehensive 340B pick-pocketing bill – [H.R. 4390, the PROTECT 340B Act of 2021](#) – was introduced in the U.S. House on July 9, 2021. If enacted, this bill would prohibit PBMs and insurers from taking CHCs’ 340B savings on drugs dispensed to patients with private insurance and Medicare. It builds on laws enacted in 15 states (including Oregon), expanding their protections to Medicare Parts C & D plans, and to all 50+ states. You can help OPCA by [sending an email](#) asking your member(s) of Congress to co-sponsor the PROTECT 340B Act of 2021.

Capitol Hill

House Appropriations

On July 29, the House passed a minibus appropriations bill which includes \$1.8 billion for the Health Center Program, an increase of \$148 million from FY21. Democrats and Republicans continue to disagree on the amount of funding in the package and the lack of inclusion of the [Hyde Amendment](#). This could lead to issues for passage of the “minibus” in the Senate.

House Moves to Make Telehealth Permanent

Reps. Glen “GT” Thompson (R-PA) and G.K. Butterfield (D-NC) introduced the HEALTH Act of 2021 (H.R. 4437) which would make telehealth flexibilities permanent under the Medicare program past the Public Health Emergency (PHE), allowing health centers to keep current policies which also include extending audio-only.

Senate Infrastructure Bill

On Sunday, August 1, Senators Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), and Rob Portman (R-OH), with a larger group of bipartisan negotiators introduced the \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill. This package includes spending over five (5) years for public transit, clean drinking and wastewater projects as well as highways/roads, broadband, and electric grid upgrades.

The bill is silent on health care but includes small grant opportunities for health centers (e.g., broadband funding). This bill will need to pass the Senate along with a Budget Resolution before becoming law. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) has said there will be no Senate recess until both bills are passed.

Help Make the Case for CHC Infrastructure Funding

Input Needed on Infrastructure Call for Information: Please respond to this [call for information](#) to help us demonstrate the importance of federal infrastructure investment as CHCs tackle the burden of an increasing patient base. We know you are busy, but this advocacy is critical. We are asking members of Congress to prioritize infrastructure funding for health centers. Your answers will help us show Congress how health centers would utilize additional federal infrastructure funding. If you have any questions, please contact Marty Carty at mcarty@orpca.org