

# Federal Update

Pandemic Response  
Workgroup

April 21, 2021

# Today's Updates

- COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force
- FY 22 President's Budget Request Analysis: Key Provisions
- FCC Announces Round 2 COVID-19 Telehealth Program
- HHS Staff Nominees

# Second COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force Meeting – April 9, 2021

- Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith convened the Task Force to discuss the Administration’s **whole-of-society** approach to mitigate health inequities caused by or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and for preventing such inequities in the future.
- Meeting specifically covered **vaccine access and confidence**.
- HHS Secretary Becerra shared his commitment to health equity, “**equity will be a part of everything we do at HHS.**”
- Three **presentations**:
  - Equity in COVID-19 Vaccinations: Understanding and Addressing Gaps
  - Achieving Health Equity for Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Communities
  - Equitable Vaccine Access for People with Disabilities

## COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force (cont.)

- Short-term and long-term recommendations focused on:
  - How federal agencies, and State, local, Tribal and Territorial officials can **best allocate COVID-19 resources to improve health care access and quality care** to appropriately **address inequalities related to vaccines' access and acceptance;**
  - Coordinating across federal agencies, State, local, Tribal and Territorial governments and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities to **advance culturally responsive communications** that are sensitive to their concerns about COVID-19 vaccines in ways to improve equitable access and acceptance rates;

## COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force (cont.)

- **How to advance cultural competency, language access, and sensitivity towards Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders** in the context of addressing structural drivers of Xenophobia, Racism, and Discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; and improving COVID-19 vaccines' access and acceptance within the communities; and
- **Expediting data collection for communities of color and other underserved populations**, and identifying data sources, proxies, or indices that address data shortfall and other foundational data challenges, including those related to data intersectionality that must be tackled in order for the nation to better prepare and equitable respond to future pandemics.

# FY 22 President's Budget Request Analysis – Some Key Provisions (Details in June?)

- HHS budget request - \$131.7 billion, a 25% increase from 2021 enacted level
  - Increased funding for CDC - \$8.7 billion to “restore capacity” – **support for core public health capacity improvements in states and territories**, modernize public health data collection nationwide, train new epidemiologists and other public health experts, and build international capacity.
  - **Expands on mental health services** included in the American Rescue Plan of 2021 by including \$1.6 billion for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (doubles 2021 level), expanding suicide prevention activities, support those involved in the criminal justice system, resources to partner mental health providers with law enforcement.
  - \$905 million for ASPR's **Strategic National Stockpile** (pharmaceuticals and medical supplies).
  - **\$51 billion for NIH.**
  - **Investments to help end the opioid epidemic** - \$10.7 billion, an increase of \$3.9 billion; supports research, prevention, treatment and recovery services; targeted investments for populations with unique needs, including Native Americans, older Americans and rural populations.
  - **Support for rural health** – through HRSA, increases funding to help rural health care providers stay open, increases funding for rural residency programs, ensures coal miners and families receive health benefits, increases to support the number of individuals from rural communities who go into health care and return or stay in their communities to provide care.

## FY 22 President's Budget Request Analysis (cont.)

- Advancing Equity
  - **In higher education** – increased support for HBCUs, TCUs, MSIs, low-resourced institutions and community colleges; \$100 million to increase participation in science and engineering of individuals from racial and ethnic groups who are underrepresented in these fields.
  - **Broadband** – Increase by \$65 million over 2021 enacted level for Reconnect, the Rural e-Connectivity Program, and prioritizing tribal lands.
  - **Social Determinants of Health** – Requests \$153 million for CDC's program, an increase of \$150 million over 2021 enacted, to support all States and Territories in improving health equity and data collection for racial and ethnic populations.
- Veterans Affairs
  - PB requests \$113.1 billion in discretionary funding for the VA; requests \$111.3 billion in advance appropriations for VA medical care programs in 2023. **Support for critical health care improvements, addressing racial disparities, modernizing IT, investing in research critical to veterans' health needs.**

# FCC Announces Round 2 of COVID-19 Telehealth Program - Application Portal – Opens April 29

- Round 2 of Telehealth Program will provide an additional \$249 million to support health care providers in all 50 States, DC and Territories.
- [www.fcc.gov/covid19telehealth](http://www.fcc.gov/covid19telehealth)
- Builds on the \$200 million program established as part of CARES Act.
- FCC's COVID-19 Telehealth Program supports efforts of health care providers to continue serving their patients by providing reimbursement for telecommunications services, information services, and connected devices necessary to enable telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic.



# Biden Administration HHS Nominees



## **Secretary Xavier Becerra**

- Former AG (CA)
- Former Congressman



## **Deputy Secretary Designate Andrea Palm**

- Former Secretary of Health (WI)
- Former senior HHS official in the Obama Administration

## Biden Administration HHS Nominees



### **CMS Administrator Designate Chiquita Brooks-LaSure**

- Former CMS official
- Former OMB official
- Former Ways and Means Staff



### **Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Nominee Dawn O'Connell**

- Former HHS official
- Former Director of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation (CEPI)

# Highlights of American Rescue Plan Funding

## Dept of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

- \$7.66 billion Public health workforce
- \$8.5 billion Vaccines (\$2.2 billion for equity)
- \$47.8 billion Testing and tracing
- \$3 billion SAMHSA block grants
- \$1.434 billion Older Americans Act
- \$7.6 billion Community Health Centers
- \$39 billion Childcare (\$17 billion in block grant)

## Non-DHHS Funds

- \$195.3 billion States and DC (\$500 million minimum)
- \$130.2 billion Cities, metros, towns (cannot be used to lower taxes)
- \$1.5 billion USDA/SNAP administration
- \$122.7 billion Education/Schools