

Friday, March 24 2023

Highlights for LPCs:

Green Initiatives: A Ziegler Report. In a recent CFO Hotline [Survey](#), Ziegler asked organizations about their 'going green' efforts; highlights are summarized below. (Notably, 67% of all organizations that participated were single-site organizations.) When asked if the community has an electric vehicle charging station, 40% said they did, and 15% have plans to install charging stations in the near future. The slight majority (55%) of all communities with charging stations do not charge residents, staff or guests to use the stations; a staggering 84% of organizations did not receive a grant or outside funding to pay for the stations to be installed. On the flip side, only 15% of all participating organizations have adopted electric vehicles for their community fleet. When asked about solar panels, the adoption rates were far lesser; only 13% have already installed panels, and 6% plan to do so in the near future. When compared to other regions of the country, those organizations that are located in the western United States had the highest adoption rates of both electric vehicles and solar panels.

Medical / COVID-19 Related Updates:

Meeting with CMS on Emergency Preparedness. LeadingAge participated in a meeting with CMS on Emergency Preparedness requirements on March 14. The meeting was coordinated by our emergency preparedness consultant Jensen Hughes to facilitate conversation on current issues. Feedback was shared related to FSES mandatory values, generator fuel storage, building systems risk assessments, and customary access. CMS acknowledged concerns and welcomed continued dialogue. The intent is to continue these "check-ins" on a regular basis.

Study Finds While End-of-Life Care Stable During COVID, Spiritual Care Lacking. A new [study](#) published in JAMDA identified 1,050 decedents using the National Health and Aging Trends Study and family caregivers post death interviews to assess quality of care their family members received for individuals both pre and during the pandemic as well as individuals with and without dementia. The study found the overall rating of care during the pandemic was deemed "not excellent" compared to individuals who died prior to the pandemic. Additionally, people who had dementia appeared to be more likely to have unmet spiritual needs at the end of life. Otherwise, dementia and the pandemic were not found to have a significant impact on the study indicators and caregivers' overall rating of care quality.

Advocacy Updates and Hill News:

LeadingAge: Solutions for Aging Services Workforce Shortage. On March 20, LeadingAge responded to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee's request for information related to the health care workforce with a sweeping review of the causes and potential solutions to the severe aging services workforce shortage. LeadingAge's comments included data, member testimonials, and powerful policy solutions. "The future health, well-being, and lives of older Americans are in your hands. These problems are resolvable with the right set of policy actions," the comments say. Read LeadingAge's comments [here](#).

Secretary Becerra Appears Before Senate Finance Committee. On March 22, HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra appeared before the Senate Finance Committee to answer questions about the President's FY2024 budget proposal. Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) mentioned the [letter](#) he wrote along with the Comprehensive Care Caucus in the fall regarding the increase of for-profit hospices that do not appear legitimate (e.g. having multiple hospices in the same office suite). Senator Barrasso asked what the Secretary was doing; the Secretary mentioned that the Department had done unannounced site visits and promised to keep Congress posted. LeadingAge worked on 34 [program integrity](#) recommendations that were shared with CMS and key Hill offices, including Senator Barrasso's, and we applaud the Senator for his tenacity around this issue. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) also mentioned his continued interest in end-of-life care, especially around a state-focused demonstration that would bring together key waivers to help ensure a smoother patient experience at the end of life. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) also uplifted his Better Care Better Jobs Act (as did Committee Chair Ron Wyden (D-OR) in his introductory remarks). We look forward to continuing to partner on these priorities.

Short-term Workforce Development Legislation Introduced. On March 10, the House Education and Workforce Committee Democrats announced Ranking Member Bobby Scott's (D-VA) introduction of legislation to make short-term training programs more affordable for adult learners and to help businesses recruit highly qualified candidates. The [Jobs to Compete Act](#) (H.R. 1655) would extend Pell Grant eligibility to adults in high-quality, short-term training programs. The Committee Democrats' [press release](#) states this expansion is particularly important as demand for short-term training courses has increased among adult learners and employers, and the federal investment in workforce development programs has fallen by two-thirds, when adjusted for inflation, over the past 40 years. Additionally, Committee Democrats argue, expansion will help alleviate financial barriers many students face in accessing and completing short-term training programs while also preparing workers to compete in the modern economy. The Committee Democrats' Fact Sheet on the [Jobs to Compete Act](#) is available [here](#). Additionally, on February 28, the Ranking Member of the Senate Special Committee on Aging Mike Braun (R-IN) introduced a similar bill, the bipartisan *JOBS Act of 2023* (S. 161) with Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA), to expand Pell Grant eligibility to short-term job training programs. The House companion (H.R. 793) was introduced by Representative Bill Johnson (R-OH).

Urge Your Senators to Join Section 202 Support Letter. U.S. Senate offices have until April 3 to join a letter to the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, HUD, and Related Agencies for strong Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly funding in FY24. LeadingAge is grateful to Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) for his leadership of the letter. "As you consider the Fiscal Year 2024 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we urge you to support the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Section 202 and 811 programs for seniors and persons with disabilities. We respectfully request: full funding for contract renewals for the Section 202 Housing for the Elderly program and an additional \$600 million for capital advances and operating subsidies for new 202 homes to keep up with existing and increasing need," the letter says. To join the letter, U.S. Senate offices should email alfie_feder@menendez.senate.gov by COB April 3. Advocates can reach their U.S. Senator and ask them to join [the letter](#) through the U.S. Capitol switchboard, 202/224-3121.

House Hearing on Hiring and Employment. On Tuesday, March 28, 10:15am ET., the House Education and the Workforce Committee will hold a hearing, "Unleashing America's Opportunities for Hiring and Employment." House Education and Workforce Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-VA) issued a [press release](#) stating the committee will examine how current economic conditions and Biden Administration are impacting employment for workers and job creators. Hearing witnesses have not been announced. The hearing will be live-streamed on the [Committee's YouTube page](#).

Eliminating Barriers to Interstate Compacts. On March 20, 11 members of the House of Representatives, led by Representatives Tracey Mann (R-KS) and Joe Neguse (D-CO), reintroduced the [State Handling Access to Reciprocity for Employment \(SHARE\) Act](#). The measure, first introduced in the 117th Congress, would make it easier for health care providers to practice more quickly when they move across state lines by allowing the FBI to share background checks across states. The bill was quickly endorsed by a number of health care related organizations including the National Rural Health Association, occupational and physical therapy organizations, and the American Speech Language Hearing Association. If enacted, the bill would reduce the amount of time consumed by new, additional background checks on staff, including long-term care providers and administrators. In the spirit of the workforce crisis requiring 100 different solutions, this would be one more tool in the toolbox.

Federal Bill Would Expand Medicare, Medicaid Coverage for Dental, Vision, Hearing. A new piece of legislation ([the Medicare and Medicaid Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefit Act](#)) introduced by Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) and Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) would help Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries access comprehensive dental, vision and hearing care under federal and state insurance programs. Some older adults can access these health services through Medicare Advantage plans or short-term individual plans, but often they come with high out-of-pocket costs. Dental, vision and hearing issues affect older adults in many ways such as development of cardiovascular disease, exacerbating fall risks, and increasing social isolation.

ACL Proposes to Expand their Direct Care Workforce Priorities. In September 2022, HHS' Administration for Community Living (ACL) established a national technical assistance center to help strengthen the direct care workforce. With FY 2023 funding, ACL is beginning to build a hub through which state, private, and federal entities involved in the recruitment, training and retention of direct care workers can access model policies, best practices, training materials, technical assistance, and learning collaboratives. In FY 2024, ACL requests \$11.5 million to fully fund operation of the resource hub and to support development of new approaches, as follows:

- [Aging Network Support Activities – Direct Care Workforce \(+\\$8 million\)](#) to fully fund hub operations and establish demonstration grants to test recruiting, retention, and training approaches that can be replicated and scaled across states.
- [Developmental Disabilities Projects of National Significance \(+\\$3 million\)/Independent Living Projects of National Significance \(+\\$500,000\)](#) to extend the scope of the above-described initiatives to the direct care workforce that supports people with disabilities who are not covered by the statutory authority of Older Americans Act.

The Direct Care Workforce information can be found on page 12 of the *FY'24 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees* (found [here](#) on the ACL website). An article with additional details is available [here](#).