



West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
Consumer Voices for Health Care

Health Care Review

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As the coronavirus continues to dominate in the news cycles--and in our lives--we at West Virginians for Affordable Health Care are reminded each day of the value of our work. Though we all continue to work remotely, we have stayed busy during this pandemic. In this special edition newsletter, we are highlighting both our work and resources around this health crisis. We have been able to push out up-to-date information on our website, emails, social media, texting campaigns, phone banks, webinars, and other electronic means to aid West Virginians in navigating health care and emerging policies as we sheltered in place.

As relief from the federal government has come in three initial bills, we are closely watching Congress for what the next bill will contain. We are starting a campaign to involve West Virginians in pushing our legislators to pass legislation that meets the needs of the people. Along with partner organizations, we are asking for things such as:

- An increased Medicaid match to help states cover increased health care costs for sick residents and displaced workers
- Additional new flexible state and local relief funds that West Virginia can use to close revenue shortfalls, preserving public services, infrastructure, and jobs
- An increase in the maximum SNAP benefit by 15 percent
- The extension of temporary relief measures, including unemployment insurance expansions and increased SNAP benefits, to last until the economy and labor market recovers.
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If you would like to contact our senators and ask for these things we have put in place, along with the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, an electronic "letter writing" campaign to push for legislation that helps struggling families in our state. If you would like to send an electronic letter, please visit: <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-sens-manchin-capito-protect-critical-health-care-and-public-services-now>

If you have lost your insurance and would like to explore your options for coverage, visit our website at: <http://wvahc.org/have-you-lost-your-health-insurance/>

And if you haven't already, follow us on Facebook for all the latest coronavirus updates as they happen and up-to-date event information: facebook.com/WVAHC.



Kids’ Health COVID Programing and Surveys

What do we do when an unexpected pandemic hits and impacts our already vulnerable children? What can we do to help? How can we plan to move forward in the future? These are just some of the questions that have been racing through our minds the past month. There were already issues to be addressed in our school systems and health care systems. Now we have a pandemic that has changed everything for teachers, doctors, nurses, students, and WV residents in general.

Thankfully, we live in a state of helpers. West Virginians, while in a state of great need, go to great lengths to provide help to one another. Because of this, we decided to look to our fellow West Virginians who are also adjusting to the current normal. Through surveys, we asked school staff, medical professionals, and parents for feedback on how COVID-19 was directly impacting their lives. We shortened our WV Kids’ Health Partnership meetings and had one speaker at time to avoid the “Zoom burnout” from online meetings and webinars. We asked speakers to educate us on how COVID-19 is impacting their work and those with whom their work directly affects. We learned how to keep going as have so many of you.

We want to thank you all for the feedback you provided for our surveys. We put out three different surveys and received beneficial input. There seemed to be a consensus that consistent policies need to be established at state level, in reference to pandemic response. Respondents felt the same

about the response of the school system. While medical providers are trying to transition to telehealth as much as possible, it is a challenge as there is a lack of reliable internet in rural areas. While I am sure this is not a surprise to many of you, it is a factor that prevents many West Virginians from utilizing telehealth services. There is cry for more school nurses, food access, and of course, for the safety of students who may not be safe at all in their home. We will be releasing a more detailed report on these surveys when they are closed. If you would like to participate in these surveys, you can find them on the WVAHC social media, as well as the Kids’ Health social media.

The participation we have had for our virtual partnership meetings has been encouraging. Thank you for your patience as we transitioned. Our speakers discussed how COVID-19 is changing how they help our most vulnerable populations. We have had the pleasure of hearing from Angie Conn, a survivor leader who founded She Who Dares LLC., Rachel Probst Kinder, the Frameworks Director for Mission West Virginia, and Lauren Frederick, Policy Development Officer for the WV Coalition to End Homelessness. Angie discussed how COVID-19 has impacted child sex trafficking in our state. She discussed how being at home is not a safer option for all children. As familial trafficking is continuing here, children being away from their teachers, mandated reporters, is a risk that needs to be addressed. Rachel spoke about some of the challenges for fostering during this pandemic and how Mission WV has adapted to make that process as easy as possible for children in Foster Care and their families. Lauren told us how her organization is addressing the risks of a population that cannot necessarily “shelter in place”. Some of our homeless have untreated medical needs that make them more susceptible to COVID-19. For access to the notes from each of these meetings, please contact us.

WVAHC Kids’ Health is welcoming your input. Please let us know if there are topics you want to hear or speak about at our partnership meetings. If you have input on policy changes, we want to hear from you. We will be moving forward with our Kids’ Health Agenda for 2021 in the next few months using the information we have gathered over the past year, while factoring in how COVID-19 will change the needs that have already been addressed. If you are working to improve the lives of children in West Virginia and would like our help or would like to have your voice heard, email us at julianne@wvahc.org



THE CARES 2 COVID-19 RELIEF BILL MUST INCLUDE:

- Additional state fiscal relief through increased Medicaid match.
- Additional new flexible emergency funds that West Virginia can use as we see best to meet families’ basic needs.
- An increase in the maximum SNAP benefit by 15 percent.

Please call YOUR Senators

Senator Shelley Moore Capito
(202) 224-6472
Senator Joe Manchin III
(202) 224-3954

Health Care for All Campaign: Shifting Gears

Like everyone else, we are finding ways to continue our work in a very different environment. The plans we made to do door-to-door canvassing are now phone banks. Our listening projects now include Covid-19 questions.

As a result of all these changes, we held our first virtual ‘phone bank training’ via zoom in April. Participants learned the basics, and then broke into pairs to practice. The additional questions added to the listening projects were designed to gauge any additional needs people might have during the shutdown. We have several resources that we are sending out that explain how to enroll in the marketplace, and Medicaid for those who have lost jobs and insurance, where to get tested, how to get food and supplies and more. (not sure should we link it here or not)

Our town halls are now being planned as virtual events and we’re coming up with ideas to make them as effective, and interactive as possible. More information our virtual town halls will be available as plans are finalized. Two have been scheduled so far--May 26th and June 2nd. Keep an eye on our Facebook and website for information on how to join.



Challenges and Medicaid Support During COVID-19

Overcoming obstacles is what West Virginians do daily, even outside of the recent global pandemic we are all facing.

Willow Stidham was one of 20 babies born at CAMC on April 7th, 2020, according to her mother Brook. As the third child to this family of now five, Medicaid provided insurance coverage and costs for the pregnancy and baby Willow was automatically signed up for the program as well.

There were both pros and cons to having to give birth during the statewide lockdown for the COVID-19 pandemic, “I feel like it could have been better, the nurses were stressed and seemed on edge because of the virus” but Brook understood and acknowledge, “the experience was different.”

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care and Brook are grateful for the essential employees and medical professionals who are keeping our families safe during these challenging times. While Brook had to wear a mask during the entirety of her stay, while she paced back and forth in her room because she was not allowed to walk around the hallways, and while Daniel was the only visitor she could have, she took to heart the trying times and noted, “I liked it in that way, not having to entertain and shower for other people.” Honestly, other mothers might be able to empathize with that comment.

Brook, when not preparing for birth, works at a local credit union in the Charleston, WV area and provides for her family as best she can with a 40-hour work for a family of five, as Daniel studies to become a barber, Medicaid fills in as a vital social support program for the family.

Not only did Medicaid cover the birth of Willow but it has also provided life-saving treatments for Brody, who has cystic fibrosis. Covering the doctor’s visits, now telemedicine visits via online portals, a vest, nebulizer, and nutritional supplements, Medicaid is helping this family stay healthy physically and preparing for their future from a financial perspective. Brook’s response to a question asked about how much treatments would cost without Medicaid for Brody, “I don’t have any idea but



I’m sure I’d have a lot of bills.” Brook and Daniel are looking for a new home for their family which has grown, but during the crisis they are currently staying with Brook’s caring mother.

With the opening of the country, a new born child, and two young boys (one with cystic fibrosis), Daniel studying for a profession which is currently “closed” (barber), and Brook getting ready to go back to work, the stress has mounted, “Right now I can keep him (Brody) safe but if they open up the country am I supposed to just keep him in the house?”

Making these difficult decisions are not just part of Brook’s family but hundreds of West Virginia families. Medicaid will be there to support them all as they continue to do their best to raise their children in a healthy environment during these challenging times. Let us continue to advocate and protect this life saving and life-giving programs in policy, elections, and by sharing our health care stories.

West Virginia Needs Heros


PLEASE CALL YOUR SENATORS

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SENATOR SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO
(202) 224-6472

SENATOR JOE MANCHIN III
(202) 224-3954



West Virginia: A Leader in Confronting COVID-19

Did you know that West Virginia was ranked as the #1 as the best state for a quick and effective response to the COVID-19 crisis? This [story in the Register Herald](#) reports on our state's top ranking in a study by [Finder.com](#). The study based rankings on when a state declared a state of emergency and when the state issued a stay-at-home order, closed schools, and closed businesses in relation to when each state first saw a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Just as critical, West Virginia's Department of Health and Human Resources has moved quickly to maximize the use of Medicaid (and Medicaid federal dollars) to respond to the growing number of unemployed in the state and to help West Virginians who test positive for COVID-19. West Virginia expanded Medicaid eligibility to more adults with 90% federal matching dollars under an option in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Thanks to the ACA, West Virginia number of uninsured adults declined from 29% to 9% - the largest decline of any state. There is no question that the ACA Medicaid expansion is helping West Virginia confront COVID-19 and to use Medicaid as an effective tool.

For details regarding temporary flexibility changes to West Virginia Medicaid rules and regulations during the COVID-19

pandemic, please see the [West Virginia Bureau of Medicaid Services website](#).

Below are highlights of the flexibilities that our state is implementing to improve our

Medicaid program's ability to help Medicaid enrollees and others in the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Medicaid will provide temporary eligibility for COVID-19 testing and treatment for individuals without insurance.
- WV is taking applications over the phone at the usual customer service center number: 1-877-716-1212. It does not matter if you are COVID-19 or not. If you are unemployed you can apply and be put on Medicaid (unless you report
- other significant income). No asset test. And coverage is retroactive for 30 days.
- Regarding new applications, according to DHHR: ***Caseworkers may request, but should not require, specific paper documentation to verify information due to the inability of our clients to obtain further documentation during this emergency. Client reported information may be used as best available information on a case by case basis. Caseworkers should still use the information provided on the application, any documentation that can be provided by the applicant, and all available electronic data sources to determine Medicaid and WVCHIP eligibility.***
- Medicaid will not conduct any redetermination of your income eligibility if

you are on Medicaid until after the end of the declaration of emergency.

- All Medicaid and CHIP co-pays and premiums are waived until the end of the emergency.
- Telephone visits are covered for all medical, DME equipment, and behavioral health services without a video or visual component. This includes School-based Health Services pursuant to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- Many face-to-face requirements are waived – such as review of a Substance Use Disorder service plan and other behavioral health services, and all in-home based services.
- Medicaid will cover early prescription drug refills and up to a 90-day supply.
- Prior authorizations requirements are waived in cases of COVID-19 or where submission of medical necessity documentation is difficult.
- Medicaid has waived a series of requirements that will allow for streamlined Medicaid participation and reimbursement by new, currently non-participating providers.
- All COVID-19 related treatment is deemed as “emergency services” or services for an “emergency medical condition.”



WV HEALTH CARE FOR ALL - VIRTUAL TOWN HALL

Mid-Ohio Valley

Are you tired of struggling -- or watching friends and family struggle -- to get life-saving health care? Do you think health care is a human right? Do you agree that West Virginians deserve better? We do! And we need your help.

Tune in for a Virtual Town Hall this Tuesday, May 26 at 6pm, to share your ideas and join the Healthcare for All WV movement. [Save your spot today!](#)

- Learn about the Healthcare for All campaign and our three big victories so far this year
- Hear about the changes we believe we can win together in 2021, like more affordable health coverage options for kids and adults, vision coverage for Medicaid, postpartum care for uninsured women, paid sick leave and more
- Tell us what else you think we need to work on
- Find out how to get involved

Even though it's digital, this Town Hall will be **very interactive**. We'll be doing live surveys where you can tell us about your experiences, rank our policy ideas so far, and share how YOU think the healthcare system needs to change.

Have your cell phone ready so that you can interact!

Two ways to join:

Sign up today and join Tuesday's event on Crowdcast (recommended)

Or, watch the livestream on the Health Care for All Page on Tuesday 6-7pm

Hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

the Health Care for All WV Team

Circles Campaign of Mid-Ohio Valley

WV Citizen Action Education Fund

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care

WV Center on Budget and Policy

Are you willing to share your health care story? Do you have a high deductible or high premiums on insurance? Are you uninsured? Did you lose healthcare coverage due to COVID-19? Are you a WV Medicaid enrollee? How about a Medicare recipient? Are you attempting to pay off expense healthcare bills? Do you have high prescription costs? Are you worried about your children's healthcare coverage?

Reach out to us to share your story of healthcare success or struggles.

Contact our Story Collection Coordinator and help impact policy on both the state and federal level.

Email Foster - foster@wvahc.org

Text/Call - 304-702-6708



West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
Consumer Voices for Health Care

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WEST VIRGINIA NEEDS OUR SENATORS TO BE HEROS FOR OUR HARD-WORKING FAMILIES.



The recent COVID-19 economic stimulus and relief package that passed the U.S. House of Representatives - HEROES Act includes a one year 7.8% increase in the federal matching funds for Medicaid state spending. For West Virginia, that would be a new additional \$350 million dollars to help our state budget revenue shortfalls and keep Medicaid in place for West Virginia families. But the fate of these critically important dollars for West Virginia is in the hands of the U.S. Senate.

**PLEASE LET OUR SENATORS KNOW WEST VIRGINIANS
SUPPORT "HEROES" AND FEDERAL FUNDING
INCREASES FOR MEDICAID AND STATE FISCAL RELIEF**

Senator Joe Manchin III
(202) 224-3954
Senator Shelley Moore Capito
(202) 224-6472