

2020 BREAKOUT REPORT:

Policy Advocacy And Implementation

The Association helps community health centers advocate for policies that provide affordable health care to more people. Our work has helped increase community health center capacity by securing funding for programs, workforce, and infrastructure.

Our 2020 Impact

Protecting the Health Care Safety Net is an ongoing priority of our policy work. During the 2020 session, the Legislature made necessary investments in the health care safety net by restoring assumed Medicaid program integrity savings from the previous session, increasing provider rates, continuing investments in the Medicaid Quality Improvement Program, and extending postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to one year.

When the coronavirus began to significantly change prospective state revenues as the legislative session was ending, Governor Inslee vetoed much proposed new spending, including the extended Medicaid postpartum coverage. Fortunately, the health care safety net was largely protected from veto, with the Governor prioritizing public health.

In addition to COVID response, our federal advocacy work focused on long-term extensions of funding for public health and Medicaid programs, including the CHC Trust Fund, as well as funding for the National Health Service Corps and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education program.

ADVOCATING FOR COVID RELIEF FUNDS

Ongoing outreach to our state's Congressional members and staff kept the urgency of COVID relief funding for community health centers top of mind. By demonstrating the critical role of CHCs in community-based COVID response and its financial impact, we helped secure \$118 million in total emergency funding for CHCs in 2020 (not including PPP).

Of the \$118 million, \$98 million came from federal stimulus bills, starting in April with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, followed by the CARES Act, Washington Expanding Capacity for Coronavirus Testing Awards, and subsequent federal funding disbursed through the Provider Relief Fund. The other \$20 million in emergency funding included Federal Communications Commission Telehealth Grants, and local, state, and NGO funds. CHCs received an additional \$48 million through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).



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Supporting Pharmacy Rate Stability

Even amidst the challenges of responding to COVID-19, we saw a major effort on the part of some drug manufacturers to limit the ability of health centers to partner with local pharmacies to get 340B drugs to our patients. The Association participated in a national legal response, assisting the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) and others to force manufacturers to deal more fairly with CHCs. Additionally, we educated members of Congress about the issue and asked them to sign on to letters of concern to both manufacturers and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service officials.

SUPPORTING REIMBURSEMENT RATE STABILITY

When the Health Care Authority (HCA) proposed a new value-based payment contract that would effectively cut CHC payments, the Association quickly began negotiating to protect the APM4 Budget Proviso and the state's innovative value-based payment program. We asserted that HCA was failing to comply with a 2019-21 Budget Proviso by attempting to change the way health centers are paid without the required oversight and approval of the Office of Financial Management and the Legislature. Through protracted and sometimes tough negotiations, the Association was able to improve proposed contract terms, leading to CHCs ultimately agreeing to the contract amendment in 2021.

Farm Worker Advocacy

Early in the pandemic, Kate White Tudor identified the need for CHCs serving the state's farm workers to engage in advocacy and she quickly convened a group of Eastern Washington CHCs to troubleshoot the public health response to pandemic developments.

Kate established trusted communications channels between health centers and a variety of public entities, including local public health jurisdictions, the State Department of Health emergency response team, Department of Agriculture, and Governor Jay Inslee's office. This work addressed the urgent health challenges facing farm workers and guided critical decisions around testing agricultural workers, providing PPE, and ensuring the safety of workers in quarantine and isolation. Through Kate's advocacy, CHCs shared community-level expertise to shape state policy protecting our essential agricultural workforce and saving lives.



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