

2019 FEDERAL POLICY AGENDA

HEALTH CARE

The Partnership recognizes that overall health and wellness for consumers is crucial for our society and business climate. As such, The Partnership endorses a health care agenda that supports health care providers, educators and organizations that comprise a large and important part of Iowa's economy. The Partnership strives to support the entire region with a health care agenda, and this presents additional challenges, including financial and access issues to those in more rural settings. In addition, The Partnership further recognizes the ever-increasing cost of health care for businesses and supports efforts to reduce the overall cost while maintaining a strong and vibrant health care system that meets the needs of employees and consumers.

AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

There are a number of opportunities currently being pursued at the federal level to drive the costs of prescription drugs down and make them more affordable for patients. The Partnership supports Congressional efforts to lower drug costs and provide a pathway for generic versions of brand name drugs and biosimilars to enter the marketplace.

The Partnership supports exploring the safe importation of prescription drugs from Canada as a potential option to increase the supply of prescription drugs and lower costs. Allowing Americans to legally access prescription drugs from outside the U.S. would provide competition in the marketplace and help patients get medications currently in short supply. Promoting transparency so patients have information on the cost of prescription drugs to inform their choices is another option to address high costs.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Congress and the Administration are considering how to create a viable and functional health insurance market where individuals can buy affordable insurance that meets their needs. As Congress tackles these complex issues, The Partnership believes that sound health care policy that offers affordable options must be based on several principles:

- The Affordable Care Act (ACA), with its strong consumer protections, including prohibitions on preexisting condition exclusions, no annual or lifetime dollar limits on coverage and allowing young adults to stay on parents' health plans until age 26, provides a good option for many Iowans, particularly those who receive federal subsidies to make ACA-compliant plans affordable.
- Individuals who have and like pre-ACA coverage, known as grandfathered and grandmothered plans, can keep them.
- A stable and broad insurance pool is essential for the long-term viability of the health insurance market. Congress and the Administration must adopt strong incentives for continuous coverage so that people do not buy health insurance only when there is an illness.
- The government must provide a reasonable level of premium assistance for people who cannot afford health care. Premium assistance and insurance rating rules must be designed to ensure that young and healthy people participate in the insurance market.

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- Because the costs for serious medical conditions are growing rapidly, a relatively small number of severely sick people significantly drive up premium costs for everyone. Programs such as high-risk pools or reinsurance help address these catastrophic costs and lower premiums.
- States should return to the traditional role of being the primary regulators of the health insurance market.
- States need increased flexibility to drive innovation that allows people to purchase health coverage they want and can afford, subject to oversight by state legislatures and regulators.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

The Partnership appreciates the priority expressed by our congressional leaders for innovative solutions to our increasing mental health needs as a community.

The Partnership supports legislation to expand programs and funding for mental health services, especially those that are community-based, to ensure access to coordinated, holistic care. The Partnership further supports action to improve mental health services and ensure parity within the Medicaid and Medicare programs by enacting critical reforms to allow for same-day and same-location mental health and primary care services and to repeal the current Medicaid exclusion on inpatient psychiatric care for certain individuals. Additionally, The Partnership supports efforts to strengthen mental health parity and provide incentives to states to help integrate mental and physical health services.

PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVES

The Partnership recognizes the unique role that public health plays in community and economic development efforts. Therefore, The Partnership supports the establishment of a free immunization program for uninsured adults, along the lines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Vaccine for Children Program. Additionally, The Partnership supports evidence-based policies and initiatives to decrease the misuse of opioids and improve access to effective treatment to those addicted.

HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

The Partnership supports expanded funding for federal programs supporting Graduate Medical Education (GME), including both Direct GME and Indirect Medical Education payments. The Partnership further supports resources to be made available to allow Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to consider exceptions for funding GME positions beyond the cap in areas with demonstrable physician shortages for particular specialties, e.g. Psychiatry, Primary Care Specialties, OB/GYN and General Surgery.

With a real shortage of OB/GYN physicians in rural Iowa communities, many community hospitals are at risk of closing. Health care leaders in DSM are looking at ways to increase the number of residency programs to support those graduates interested in staying in Iowa and serving the rural and urban needs of fetal maternal care. As Iowa is currently 49 out of 50 in the number of specialists in this field and with only one OB/GYN in the State of Iowa at the University of Iowa, The Partnership seeks support of Congress for approaches to increase residency programs in this field for those interested in staying in Iowa to serve this important need.

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MEDICAID

Medicaid expansion has provided thousands of lower income lowans with access to health care. Congress should carefully consider changes to the Medicaid program to make sure that low-income persons continue to receive coverage.

MEDICARE

The Partnership supports improving fairness and equity in Medicare payments between geographical areas and supports the implementation of new reimbursement models, such as the shared savings program, that reward quality and efficiency, not quantity of services. Specifically, The Partnership supports eliminating the inaccuracies and inequities in the Geographic Practice Cost Index (GPCI) geographic adjusters to Medicare payment for physicians and using contemporary market or actual cost data for physicians.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Iowan families and communities have been devastated at the impact opioids have had on our community and The Partnership is seeking solutions to address this epidemic. The Partnership appreciates the bipartisan support Congress has received for prevention and treatment of substance use disorder (SUD). The Partnership supports initiatives that require the Drug Enforcement Administration to use data to track and prevent the diversion of prescription opioids into illegal sales, and to provide education and training for health care providers to become knowledgeable of best practices when prescribing controlled substances to address the opioid abuse, overdose deaths and public health.

SPECIALIZED PEDIATRIC MEDICAL CARE

Children with complex medical conditions receive better results with highly coordinated care. Nearly two-thirds of the three million children with complex medical conditions are covered by Medicaid, representing close to 40 percent of Medicaid costs for children. These children have illnesses and conditions including cancer, congenital heart disease, cystic fibrosis, Down syndrome and chronic health challenges from premature birth, which often require them to travel to another state to find treatment. The Partnership supports legislation that would make it possible for health care providers to coordinate care, lower costs and improve quality outcomes for children with complex medical conditions on Medicaid who require specialized care.