



Capitol News!

by the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

Dear NASHIA Member,

Welcome to *Capitol News*, Issue 3, which you receive as a NASHIA member. This issue features legislation and issues currently before Congress. Last week, NASHIA and its members and other advocates participated in a successful Congressional Brain Injury Task Force Awareness Day held March 4. A record number of members and advocates visited with their Representatives and Senators requesting additional funding for Traumatic Brain Injury programs. A further update will be forthcoming in other publications.

As you are aware, federal, State and community leaders are trying to address the affect the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is having on our citizens, including people with disabilities and who are aging. Many meetings and offices have subsequently closed, which is changing the way work is being conducted. Last Friday, the President signed into law an \$8 billion funding bill to use for treating and preventing the spread of COVID-19. The House of Representatives is working on a relief bill package to include paid sick leave, enhanced unemployment insurance, free coronavirus testing and food aid. The Senate is expected to return next week to work on a measure that the White House can support.

Meanwhile, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization, known as the Supporting Seniors Act, has passed both legislative chambers and sent to the President. Read further for more information. As always, do not hesitate to contact Susan Vaughn, Director of Public Policy, should you have any questions at svaughn@nashia.org and/or visit the public policy pages on the NASHIA [website](#).

Legislation Passed

Congress Passes the Older Adults Reauthorization Bill with TBI Provisions

Yesterday, the House of Representatives passed by unanimous consent the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020, H.R. 4334, bipartisan legislation that helps provide social and nutrition services to older Americans. Having accepted the Senate's changes, the legislation now heads to the President's desk to be signed into law. The bill includes provisions authored by the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) relating to screening older adults for traumatic brain injury (TBI) after a fall and including TBI in health promotion activities.

The Older Americans Act (OAA), initially passed in 1965, funds critical services that keep older adults healthy and independent and includes funding for meals, job training, senior centers, health promotion, benefits enrollment, caregiver support, transportation, and more. NASHIA Executive Director, Rebecca

Wolfkiel said, "I am pleased that Congress included TBI screening in the bill since older adults are at high risk for TBI due to falls. The support from the aging community was critical in making this happen."

Other Legislation

House Lawmakers Introduce TBI and PTSD Law Enforcement Bill

During the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force (CBITF) Awareness Day held March 4, CBITF co-chair, Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) announced that he, along with co-chair Don Bacon (R-NE), John Rutherford (R-FL), T.J. Cox (D-CA), and Val Demings (D-FL) introduced the "TBI and PTSD Law Enforcement Training Act." H.R. 6008 would implement several measures to better train law enforcement for interactions with individuals suffering from traumatic brain injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

"Symptoms of TBI and PTSD can be difficult to identify, which can lead to confusion and a potentially unnecessary escalation of a situation," said Rep. Pascrell, who leads both the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force and the Congressional Law Enforcement Caucus. This bill will equally help our first responders as well as those dealing with the every-day symptoms of TBI, PTSD, and other trauma-related ailments. We want to better prepare our police and first responders to identify those symptoms and assist individuals who are suffering from them. I'm grateful for the bipartisan efforts of Representatives Bacon, Cox, Demings, and Rutherford and I look forward to working with them to advance this measure."

NASHIA Supports READI for Disasters Act

In response to COVID-19, NASHIA signed on to a letter that the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Emergency Management Task Force is sending to the House Education and Labor Committee and Transportation and Infrastructure Committee urging their attention to the READI for Disasters Act. The Real Emergency Access for Aging and Disability Inclusion (READI) for Disasters Act (H.R. 3208 and S.1755) would address and advance solutions for many of the problems arising in the response to COVID-19 and the impact on people with disabilities.

Advocates Call for Making MFP and Spousal Impoverishment Protections Permanent

NASHIA signed on to the March 10 Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), Disability and Aging Collaborative (DAC) [letter](#) to Senate leadership calling for Congress to make permanent extension of the Money Follows the Person Program (MFP) and Spousal Impoverishment Protections included in the bipartisan Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction and Health and Human Services Improvement Act. The MFP and Spousal Impoverishment Protections are set to expire May 22.

House Members and Senators Support an Occupational Code for DSPs

On March 2, Sens. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Susan Collins (R-ME) and Reps. Kathleen Rice (D-NY), Sean Maloney (D-NY), Peter King (R-NY), John Katko (R-NY), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Brendan Boyle (D-PA) introduced legislation to create a standard occupational code for direct support professionals (DSPs). "Recognizing the Role of Direct Support Professionals Act," (S. 3369 and H.R. 6045) directs the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to set a standard occupational code (SOC) for DSPs and compile employment data on DSPs. DSPs are frontline workers who support people with disabilities to live as independently as possible.

Other

Lawmakers Urge CMS to Delay Weakening Medicaid NEMT Services

Reps. Buddy Carter (R-GA), Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Tom Graves (R-GA) and Sanford Bishop (D-GA) are urging the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to delay any decisions to weaken the requirement that States provide non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) to Medicaid beneficiaries. Last year's spending legislation required Congress review the issue prior to regulatory action. The lawmakers note in the letter that CMS's fall 2019 regulatory agenda pushed up the date of a rule that is widely expected to roll back the regulatory requirement for NEMT, from December 2021 to this upcoming December. The fall 2019 regulatory agenda also indicated that CMS plans to release a Request for

Information asking about the necessity of NEMT benefits in Medicaid. The lawmakers are the original cosponsors of the Protecting Patients Transportation to Care Act (H.R. 3935) NEMT provides transportation services to individuals with disabilities or who are elderly to health care appointments and other needed services.

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The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators assists State government in promoting partnerships and building systems to meet the needs of individuals with brain injuries and their families.