



Breaking News: Congress Passes COVID-19 Relief Bill Including ASHP Priorities

Congress approved another COVID-19 relief package that is expected to be signed by the President this week. There were a limited number of healthcare provisions included:

- **COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing:** The package includes \$70 billion in additional funding to go towards vaccines and testing. Of the \$70 billion, \$15 billion will go toward expanding and improving the distribution and administration of vaccines, and \$6 billion will go toward research, development, and manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccines.
- **Expand Medicaid Coverage and Financing:** The package offers several changes to Medicaid financing and eligibility to increase coverage access. This includes postpartum coverage and an expansion initiative for states who have not already done so. The package will also require Medicaid and CHIP coverage of COVID-19 vaccines and treatment without beneficiary cost sharing.
- **Additional Funding for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:** The package will allocate \$3.5 billion for block grants addressing mental health and substance use disorders. Several million more will be allocated for grants addressing mental health in the healthcare workforce, community-driven overdose prevention and harm reduction, and an additional \$100 million will be allocated for behavioral health workforce education and training.
- **Additional Funding for the Public Health Workforce:** The package will provide the Department of Health and Human Services with over \$9 billion in public health workforce-related support. This includes \$7.66 billion for establishing, expanding, and sustaining the public health workforce. The bill also will include \$100 million for the Medical Reserve Corps, \$800 million for the National Health Service Corps, \$200 million for the Nurse Corps, and \$330 million for teaching health centers that operate graduate medical education.
- **Provider Relief Fund (PRF):** The bill also contains a provision providing increased funding for the PRF. This provision will replenish the PRF with \$8.5 billion in order to reimburse rural healthcare providers for expenses and revenue lost due to COVID-19.

We extend our deepest appreciation to all of our members who have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic and to those who participated in ASHP's call to action requesting that Congress increase funding to the PRF. Thank you.

ASHP will continue to provide analysis of the provisions impacting pharmacists and their patients.