

Status Report: Health Care Reform Legislation Where Health-System Pharmacy Stands

As Congress breaks for its August recess, legislators have made significant progress towards health care reform legislation. Here is what we know so far:

- There are two health care reform bills: HR 3200, “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009,” in the House of Representatives and a draft bill from the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee.
- A proposal from the Senate Finance Committee is expected to be released in mid-September. The draft will be merged with the HELP Committee version.
- Votes to approve the legislation in both chambers are likely to be held in September.

The House bill includes:

- A **medication therapy management** (MTM) grant program managed by the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality that would enable pharmacists to provide MTM services to chronically ill patients, as part of a coordinated care plan among the patient’s caregivers. This is not specific to any public or private plan but would be applicable across the board, including in the medical home model. **We want this provision to stay!**
- **Loan forgiveness** for pharmacy graduates in exchange for a commitment to practice in underserved areas. It is separate from the National Health Service Corps and would specifically target those health professions that are not eligible for the health service corps. **We want this provision to stay!**

The House bill does not include:

- Restoration of **funding for PGY2 residency programs**. ASHP is seeking an amendment to restore funding for these critical programs. **We want to include this in the bill!**
- **Recognition of pharmacists as providers**, similar to other non-physicians, such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants. **We want to include this in the bill!**

Contact Your Representative to:

- Ask for support to keep the MTM and loan forgiveness provisions in the bill.
- Ask for an amendment that restores funding for PGY2 residencies.
- Ask for an amendment to recognize pharmacists as non-physician providers.

The Senate HELP Committee bill includes:

- The creation of a patient safety research center that would award grants for **pharmacist-provided MTM** services to chronically-ill patients. **We want this provision to stay!**
- A requirement for MTM services in the **medical home** care model. **We want this provision to stay!**

The Senate HELP Committee bill does not include:

- Expansion of **loan forgiveness programs** to include pharmacists. The bill does call for further analysis of the health care workforce supply, but does not expand loan forgiveness programs to include pharmacists. We want to include this in the bill!
- Funding for **PGY2 residency programs**. The Senate Finance committee has jurisdiction over that issue because it deals with Medicare funding. ASHP has actively lobbied the Finance Committee to restore funding for the residency programs, but we won't know the outcome of those efforts until the Finance Committee bill is made public. **We want to include this in the bill!**
- **Recognition of pharmacists as providers** similar to other non-physicians, such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

Contact Your Senators to:

- Ask for their support to keep the MTM provisions in the HELP Committee version of the bill.
- Ask for an amendment expanding loan forgiveness programs to include pharmacists.
- Ask for an amendment to recognize pharmacists as non-physician providers.
- Stress the need for a provision that restores funding for PGY2 residency programs.