



### **Capitol Hill Update: Summer 2009**

This update recaps Congress' work on spending bills and health care reform. The House and Senate are currently on summer recess and will return to work on September 8.

#### Funding Bills for Key Mental Health Programs Move Through Congress

Following the Obama Administration's proposal in February of a roughly 2 percent increase for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Congress took the reins of the appropriations process and continued to demonstrate its leadership by funding SAMHSA and NIH above the Administration's requests—a nearly decades-long trend. It cements the fact that there is wide support in the House and Senate for our programs.

Just as important, and in a reversal of years past, programs for/by consumers were not targeted for proposed cuts—funding for critical programs such as the Consumers Technical Assistance Centers and the Statewide Consumer/Family Network Grants did not face the budget scalpel for the first time in nearly half a decade.

The House provided nearly half of its \$85 million increase for SAMHSA to CMHS (\$39M), while the Senate continues to grow Project Launch and the Integration Grants, to name a few of their priorities. The House increase is roughly \$25 million more than the Administration had requested, whereas the Senate increase for CMHS is about \$3 million above the Administration's request. MHA leads the MHLG (Mental Health Liaison Group) appropriations work and helped draft an appropriations document (available online: [www.mhlg.org/appropfy2010.pdf](http://www.mhlg.org/appropfy2010.pdf)) that was used to organize nearly two dozen visits with appropriators' staff.

The House would provide \$39 million in increases for CMHS in the Labor, Health and Human Services & Education appropriations bill (H.R. 3293)—pushing funding for mental health services over a \$1 billion dollars for the first time. The increases include: a \$17 million increase for Children's Mental Health; an \$8 million increase for State homelessness (PATH) grants; and a

\$7 million increase to double an initiative that integrates primary and behavioral health care. The House would also provide nearly a \$1.5 million increase for suicide prevention efforts, a \$2 million increase for addressing the needs of children with post-traumatic stress, a \$1 million increase for protection and advocacy, and a \$0.5 million increase for the Healthy Students/Safe Schools program. Lastly, the House would provide a roughly 4 percent increase for NIH nearly doubling the Administration's increase request. The House passed HR 3293 264-153 on July 24.

The Senate would provide nearly \$3 million in increases above the Administration's request for CMHS. The Senate Appropriations panel passed the funding bill out of committee on July 30th by a vote of 29-1 that included: a \$1 million increase for suicide prevention efforts; a \$2 million increase for addressing the needs of children with post-traumatic stress; a \$5 million increase for Project Launch; a \$12 million increase for Children's Mental Health; a nearly \$5.5 million increase for PATH; and a \$2 million increase for integration grants. The Senate bill would provide nearly the same amount that the Administration had requested for NIH. The Senate is expected to take up the Labor, HHS bill by mid-September with a conference committee organizing shortly thereafter.

**Housing:** While the Administration proposed level funding for Section 811 Supportive Housing (\$250M), the House would provide \$350 million (a \$100 million increase in HR 3288; passed 256-168 on July 23) and the Senate would provide \$265 million for Section 811 (the Senate has yet to take floor action).

**Juvenile Justice:** Although the Administration proposed level funding for juvenile justice programs (~\$300M), the House would provide \$347 million (HR 2847; passed 259-157 on June 18) and the Senate would provide \$379 million for juvenile justice programs (the Senate has yet to take floor action).

**Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act:** While the Administration proposed level funding for the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction grant program (\$10M), the House would provide \$12 million (HR 2847; passed 259-157 on June 18) and the Senate would provide \$10 million for MIOTCRA (the Senate has yet to take floor action).

**Health Care Reform: Congress Makes Progress as Debate Continues**

Congress has made a lot of progress on developing health care reform legislation. While the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the three Committees of jurisdiction in the House have already approved very similar health care reform bills, there are some

significant differences. These discrepancies will have to be worked out. In addition, the Senate Finance Committee is still working on a compromise version of the legislation that they hope will garner some Republican support. The Finance Committee is expected to issue its version of this legislation some time in September.

Many members of Congress are hearing from radical groups who oppose health care reform. It will be important for mental health advocates to help counter these negative messages by attending public events and speaking out in support of expanding health care coverage to the uninsured and making improvements to our current health care system. We also encourage you to seek individual or group meetings with members of Congress to discuss these issues.

**[www.mhafc.org](http://www.mhafc.org) / 538 East Town Street, STE D, Columbus, OH 43215  
614.221.1441**