

COVID-19 Weekly Public Policy Recap

April 30, 2020

Congressional Updates

After passage of a supplemental aid bill last week, Congress turned this week to the next House-led coronavirus aid package. Democrats and Republicans are negotiating their priorities as the next coronavirus bill begins to take shape in Congress with Democrats wanting to provide another \$500 billion for state and local governments. After Mitch McConnell offered up direct state aid in the next coronavirus aid package in exchange for business liability protections, Speaker Pelosi said Wednesday that Democrats will not support those protections. The liability protections would essentially allow businesses to avoid responsibility for patient and workforce protections already passed in previous packages, including paid family and medical leave. On Thursday, Speaker Pelosi estimated the need for state aid would total \$1 trillion over the next three to four years.

The next package will likely include aid to state and local governments, implementation of guardrails for the Paycheck Protection Programs, funding for vote-by-mail for the November elections, food assistance and infrastructure improvements which were all rumored to be in the last package before lawmakers pumped the brakes. Komen continues to push our key priorities with lawmakers, make sure you add your voice [here](#).

The timing of this new package is once again up in the air as House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer announced that the House will no longer return to Washington next week as originally planned. The Senate will continue as planned and return to the Capitol on Monday.

Administration Updates

Economy

Announced Sunday, the Trump administration will impose limits on how much individual banks can lend under the Paycheck Protection Program due to the program's high demand among businesses seeking relief from effects of the coronavirus pandemic. After a three week-long fight in Congress to secure more funding, the Small Business Administration will limit individual banks and lenders to 10 percent of the program's overall funding, or \$60 billion, and direct financial institutions to slow the pace of applications for the program.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is reportedly investigating a second round of direct stimulus checks. Speaker Pelosi has corroborated the President's priorities saying earlier this month that more direct payments will be crucial in the next package. With support from the White House, Congressional Republicans may be forced to support this policy or risk breaking party lines. This comes after the IRS announced that so far, 89.5 million payments totaling \$160.4 billion have been distributed. The agency expects to send out more than 150 million payments overall for the first round alone.

Testing & Treatment

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention added several new symptoms this week to its existing list of symptoms for COVID-19. It has now added six more conditions that may come with the disease: chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and new loss of taste or smell.

The expanded symptoms list could prove important because with a limited number of test kits available, typically those seeking a test must first show symptoms.

The Trump administration released their plan for ramping up the country's testing efforts--which are critical to its ability to reopen. The [document](#) lays out an 8-step plan that centers around three core elements: a robust diagnostic testing plan; a timely monitoring system; and, a rapid response program. President Trump reiterated an urgency for a robust system of testing while providing a blueprint that falls short of the several million tests per day needed. The US has conducted 5.8 million tests for COVID-19 so far with the most tests conducted in one day only reach just above 314,000.

NIH [announced](#) it will invest \$1.5 billion in a new program to speed up development of testing. The program is named Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx). RADx will infuse funding into early innovative technologies to speed the development of rapid and widely accessible COVID-19 testing, while also seeking opportunities to move more advanced diagnostics through the development pipeline toward commercialization and broad availability

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will grant an emergency use authorization for remdesivir after early results from a clinical trial showed the drug's promise in treating COVID-19 patients with patients recovering 31% quicker than those in the placebo group.

The Trump administration is pushing agencies to speed up the vaccine development process in the hopes of quickly coming up with an effective way to guard against the coronavirus. The push, dubbed "Operation Warp Speed," will involve the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the FDA, among other government agencies. The goal of the program will be having 100 million doses ready by the end of 2020, despite most health officials repeatedly warning the timetable for a vaccine would put likely release in early to mid-2021.

State Updates

State budget shortfalls from COVID-19's economic fallout could total \$650 billion over three years, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimated today based on new economic projections from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and updated projections from Goldman Sachs. CBO now projects that unemployment will average 15 percent for the next six months and then fall only slowly. It will still be 9.5 percent — just short of its 10 percent peak in the Great Recession — at the end of 2021. These CBO estimates take into account the federal aid already enacted for businesses, individuals, and state and local governments.

We have heard the first rumblings of what this could mean specifically for the programs we care about deeply. In Colorado, the budget is reportedly looking at a \$2.5-\$3 billion shortfall in the upcoming fiscal year, beginning on July 1, primarily as a result of COVID-19. The Joint Budget Committee recently outlined their recommended cuts to the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, which included a **reduction of 33% for the Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (BCCP)**. While we are still gathering information, this is expected to just be the tip of the iceberg.

Recent Komen Engagement

This week Komen joined several patient advocacy organizations as part of the Partnership to Protect Coverage in a letter to the Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights. The letter urges the HHS Office of Civil Rights to issue additional guidance to make clear that state emergency triage guidance

that would limit or restrict access to life-saving care for certain patients with underlying conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic violate federal antidiscrimination law. This is in response to several state emergency triage plans specifically naming metastatic disease a potential disqualifying factor for receiving a ventilator in the event of a shortage. The letter will be available on myKomen when it is finalized.

In Other News

- [Health Insurers Prosper As COVID-19 Deflates Demand For Elective Treatments](#)
- [U.S. medical testing, cancer screenings plunge during coronavirus outbreak - data firm analysis](#)
- [Pandemic triage: 29 plans, 29 different approaches for allocating ventilators amid a shortage](#)
- [How to Think About Your Cancer Care in the Time of COVID-19](#)
- [Trump's 'Operation Warp Speed' Aims to Rush Coronavirus Vaccine](#)
- [U.S. could be in for 'a bad fall and a bad winter' if it's unprepared for a second wave of coronavirus, Fauci warns](#)