LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 117TH CONGRESS

Lutheran Services in America and our network of over 300 health care and human services organizations work each day to enable people throughout America to reach their full potential. We urge lawmakers to take the following actions in the 117th Congress.

Priority #1: Strengthen the Nonprofit Health and Human Services Sector

Ensure that front line health and human services providers have the financial and material support they require to meet the increasing needs of individuals and communities during and following the COVID-19 public health emergency.

- Provide forgivable loans for all nonprofit health and human services providers, including those with 500 or more employees, as well as resources to purchase PPE, testing, and vaccines.
- Classify all staff in congregate care or home- and community-based settings as “essential workers.”
- Reimburse 100% of the cost of unemployment insurance benefits paid by nonprofits who self-fund these benefits.
- Create a targeted grant program for certain non-hospital health and human services nonprofits to cover unreimbursed COVID-19 expenses.
- Prepare providers, via updated technology and staff training, for the transition to value-based payments.

Priority #2: Ensure Equitable Health Outcomes for All Americans

Reduce health disparities and improve outcomes across demographic groups by addressing key social determinants of health, including housing, and ensure equitable access to high-quality, affordable health care for all.

- Maintain and increase Medicaid and Medicare funding, including an increased Medicaid FMAP, and fairly reimburse providers.
- Achieve equitable treatment for COVID-19 (including testing and vaccination) across a variety of age and racial demographic groups.
- Permanently integrate high-quality, widely available telehealth into the U.S. health care system.
- Protect continued coverage of the previously underserved and people with pre-existing conditions.
- Decriminalize homelessness and increase investment in and access to affordable housing stock.

Priority #3: Strengthen the Direct Care Workforce

Secure sufficient funding and support to expand and train a more sustainable workforce, including the 90% of direct care workers who are women and the 60% who are people of color, to care for and help empower America’s seniors, people with disabilities, and children, youth, and families.

- Secure higher reimbursement rates and provide additional funding for hazard and overtime pay for front line nonprofit health and human services organizations.
- Build and fund programs and innovative models of care that directly address recruitment, training and retention of a well-qualified workforce.
- Refine overly technical requirements for providers and their workers to help maintain workforce levels.