

California

California lawmakers introduce bill to ban balance-billing for insured patients– Assembly Bill 1611 was introduced earlier last week after news reports came out about Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital leaving many insured patients with high bills because they didn't accept private insurance. If passed, the bill will cap insurance payments at 150 percent of the Medicare reimbursement. To learn more about surprise medical bills, check out *our policy brief*.

Dentist in Oakland seeks to integrate mental health services with oral health– Dr. Huong Le runs Asian Health Services, a community dental clinic that provides services for Chinatown residents near Oakland. After noting that many of her older patients express suicidal thoughts, she began screening them for mental health and hired a full-time mental health provider to offer services in the clinic. Asian and Pacific Islanders have higher suicide rates than African Americans and Hispanic Caucasians. Dr. Le will soon be expanding her services to younger populations.

Other States

Tornadoes in Alabama claim nearly two dozen lives–A series of tornadoes hit many of the same counties in Alabama recently. Four of the victims were children, and around seven people are still missing. The governor declared a state of emergency and has asked the Federal Emergency Management Agency for a disaster declaration. A tornado also swept through Georgia and destroyed multiple residences and businesses.

Seattle-based organization leading the charge for an international treaty to declare an end to violence against women– Every Woman Treaty is an organization that is launching a public campaign to influence the World Health Organization to create a treaty that would call for an end to violence against women. They aim to get all 193 United Nations members to ratify it. The organization calls for the development of laws that create punishments for domestic violence, train professionals from an array of fields to identify the signs, educate children, and develop hotlines, shelters, and a multitude of services for victims.

Alzheimer's Association finds that the increase in the death rate due to Alzheimer's in Georgia is well above national average– Between 2000 and 2017, there was a 248 percent increase in the death rate in Georgia and a 145 percent increase nationwide. The report estimates that the prevalence will increase drastically in the next six years. It also estimates that this year, the Medicaid costs for caring for Alzheimer's patients in Georgia will surpass \$1 billion and will rise by 33 percent by 2026.

New York's September 11th Victim Compensation Fund is diminishing rapidly with no plan to refund– The fund was created by an Act of Congress in 2001 to provide health care compensation for the victims and families of 9/11 in exchange for the recipients to agree not to sue the airline companies. More than two-thirds of the fund has been used since nearly \$7 billion were allotted in 2015. Between 2004 to 2011, the fund was temporarily closed down. In recent years, the number of claims has also increased. There is uncertainty over whether more funds will be allotted.

Commissioners of a Florida County remove "Three Strikes" policy that made it difficult for felons to receive health care– The Hillsborough County Health Care Plan (HCHCP) was designed to provide coverage to those who live below 125 percent of the poverty level and cannot qualify for Medicare or Medicaid. The Commissioners also hope to add vision benefits and expand eligibility from 125 percent to 138 percent of the poverty level. These changes are expected to provide 1,760 more people with coverage with 31 percent of them gaining it through the removal of the "Three Strikes" policy.

Lawmakers from California and Texas push for Vaccines Save Lives Resolution– The resolution calls for Congress to reject false and unfounded theories regarding the dangers of vaccines and to promote educational awareness of the proven benefits of vaccines. In similar news, a teenager testified before Congress this week saying that his mother was against vaccines because of misinformation spread by illegitimate sources on social media. He was allowed to remain unvaccinated and attend school due to the exemption laws in Ohio.

Healthcare-Related Polls and Surveys

29%

Percentage of patients who reported skipping their medication last year because the cost was too high, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll.

70%

Percentage of adults between the ages of 55 and 64 who reported that they would go with a short-term health plan primarily for affordability reasons, according to an online health insurance survey by eHealth.

840%

Percentage difference of some asthma, blood pressure, and diabetes medications purchased at large, chain pharmacies compared to small, independent pharmacies according to a survey by the US Public Interest Group.

Newsbytes Relevant to Our Strategic Priorities



To bring focus to our work, the Institute for Health Policy and Leadership has identified three strategic priorities: oral health, mental health and hunger as a health issue. This segment highlights news articles relevant to these priorities.

Oral Health

Pew Charitable Trusts sees steady progress in children's oral health in the US– The group found that the prevalence of untreated tooth decay among youth between 2 and 19 years decreased from 16 percent in 2011 to 13 percent in 2015. There are still disparities related to income, race and ethnicity. For instance, African American children have the highest prevalence (17 percent) while Asians have the lowest (11 percent).

Hunger as a Health Issue

World Food Program's Innovation Accelerator shows promise in combating worldwide hunger– The Innovation Accelerator is a program that provides startups with grants and other resources to carry out ideas. The program has been running since 2016 and has already had success in places like Peru and Jordan where a hydroponics system has been expanded to help grow vegetables in harsh environments. Eight programs have been scaled and have benefited hundreds of thousands of people.

Mental/ Behavioral Health

Denmark researchers find that exposure to open, green space during childhood decreases the risk of developing mental illness– For some psychiatric disorders, the lowered risk was 55 percent. The study contributes to a body of evidence that suggests that the environment is a risk factor for mental health and should be considered when designing city environments that will affect early development in children.