

Funders Oral Health Policy Group

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THE FOHPG NOVEMBER WEBINAR!

Thank you to everyone who joined us last week for an enlightening convening! Below you will find notes from the discussion. You can also view a [recording of the meeting here](#).

Thank you to our guest speakers **Sarah Vidrine** from NC Child, **William Hoagland** from Bipartisan Policy Center, and **Mayra Alvarez** from The Children's Partnership!

Reminders:

- Fill out the [evaluation for the November Webinar](#).
- Sign the [2021 FOHPG Membership Pledge](#)
- Distribute the [Health Equity Education Planning and Facilitation RFP](#)
- Help us [recruit new members!](#)

November Webinar Notes

POST-ELECTION INSIGHTS FROM A POLICY EXPERT

Election Results

- 2020 election had historic voter turnout, nearly 65% of the voting-eligible population cast a ballot, more than any other election in more than 100 years.
- Young people were critical in the turnout of the election. 61% of people aged 18-29 supported Biden. Analysis suggests an increase of 10% in youth voter turnout. This could be due to a combination of grassroots organizing and state officials taking proactive steps to register younger voters earlier on in the process and educate them.
- More women will serve in the 117th Congress than ever before (at least 140, surpassing the previous record of 127). The number of Republican women elected to Congress grew from 22 to 35 - setting a record for Republican women in Congress, breaking the previous one of 30.
- Communities of color voted overwhelmingly for Biden - 70% of Latinos, 89% of Blacks, 68% of Asians, and 60% of American Indians. Multicultural collaboratives made a difference in this election and will likely make a difference in the elections to come.

Grassroots Organizing

- Pandemic required online mobilization focused on educating and registering young voters and promoting mail-in ballots. Overall, mail-in voting in 2020 outnumbered the total turnout in the 2016 general election.
- In Georgia, Stacey Abrams and the Fair Fight coalition helped register over 800,000 new voters delivering the first presidential election win in Georgia since 1992.
- In Arizona, the Native American electorate was consequential to the state's outcome as were Latino community organizations.
- Election highlighted that we continue to live in a very divided country and that racial inequality was a motivating factor for many voters. Funders can be responsive as health care advocates and work to support, inform, and engage underrepresented populations in the building back of your communities.

Biden-Harris Transition Priorities

- The interconnected transition team priorities: COVID-19 economic recovery, racial equity, and climate change.
- They have been announcing appointments. Commitment to an administration that is representative of America. [Agency review teams](#) were

announced last week.

Health Policy Forecasting

- Funders should start asking themselves: what does health equity look like in federal government policies and procedures? How can we hold our elected officials accountable to health equity and ensuring that people are at the table, that data is being shared, and that we are making important inroads and closing gaps?
- Areas of opportunity and collaboration in the House and Senate around COVID response, drug pricing, and maternal health and infant mortality.

Oral Health Opportunities

- Practice changes, using teledentistry to provide preventive services.
- Public education and messaging that emphasizes that oral health does matter during these times. Pushing for our public health departments and state leaders, as well as the federal government to communicate this.
- Protecting and strengthening Medicaid reimbursement for all health services is particularly important considering how there are many gaps in oral health services for low-income communities.



POST-ELECTION INSIGHTS: CURRENT POLICY LANDSCAPE IMPACT ON STATES

- SCOTUS Hearings on the Affordable Care Act – the US Supreme Court has started ACA hearings. Several of the justices have been skeptical of the case and it is looking likely either the case will be dismissed or only portions of the ACA will be struck down. If the ACA is struck down, Biden’s administration is likely to build on it instead of trying to replace it.
- North Carolina is attempting an expansion of their adult dental benefit. If it

succeeds, over half a million North Carolinians would have dental insurance.

- Any expansion of ACA is likely to be blocked by the US Senate if Republicans maintain control.
 - 98% of North Carolina has been designated a dental professional shortage area and dental offices continue to close due to COVID.
 - North Carolina has one of the most restrictive dental practice acts in the nation. There has been some bipartisan interest in addressing some of these restrictions, including the workforce. There will likely be a teledentistry bill in the legislature this coming session. The bill would improve access by allowing a hygienist to consult with a dentist remotely. Dental Therapy is also being considered. Any of these approaches will require attention to equity and a strong community-driven movement.
 - The typical health advocate is not really paying attention to oral health. And this impacts the ability to advocate for change at both the federal and the state level. This is partly due to the very intentional organized dentistry approach, that they have been positioned as the only credible voice for oral health.
 - The best advocates for oral health are the people directly impacted by a lack of access to it. To keep oral health at the forefront of healthcare advocacy, NC Child has shifted their approach from building a bench of professional advocates, to mirroring their approach to oral health to that of their approach to community engagement.
 - When the community is involved in advocacy and policymaking from the start, rather than as an afterthought, that policy is more likely to affect real system change, and make a positive difference in the lives of those who are directly impacted.
 - When they consulted community members, NC Child heard a lot of skepticism around the idea that their proposed policy solutions would result in positive change and advance equity. These parents and caregivers enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP were worried the policies could potentially reinforce inequities, through a disparate system of care.
 - We need not just to include communities and those directly impacted, but to listen to them and follow their lead. What solutions are they proposing? How are we assessing policies to be sure they do not result in unintended consequences?
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BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19: WHAT TO EXPECT

- It is unlikely that there will be another COVID-19 stimulus bill passed before the end of the fiscal year (12/11).
- The GDP is estimated to be at -6% for 2020, below pre-COVID estimates. There is still a possibility that we will be looking at continued growth.
- 10.5% estimated unemployment rate for 2020. Before the COVID shutdown, we had one of the lowest unemployment rates in almost 50 years.
- A highlight is that the 10-year note interest rate is forecasted at a very low rate, 0.9%. That is good as it relates to the federal budget because it means that the interest, we will incur on that debt will remain low.
- The US was on an unsustainable debt path going forward before COVID and we will have close to the \$3.2 trillion deficit for the 2020 fiscal year, up from a trillion-dollar deficit in 2019. The deficit is a historically unprecedented 16% of the GDP. The total amount of debt held by the public as a share of GDP is well above the Great Recession, World War Two, and The Great Depression and it will impact future generations.
- By 2030, we will be spending close to \$7 trillion on Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, defense, and paying the interest on our public debt. There will be continued pressure to reduce the budgets of these programs.
- Increasing taxes above the unwritten limit of 17% of the GDP will be necessary to sustain and grow Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.
- Medicare, Medicaid, children's health insurance program will grow over the next decade by about 5.3% faster than the great nominal rate of growth in the overall economy.
- Total federal mandatory spending of \$4.6 trillion for 2020, major healthcare spending remained relatively unchanged. Several of the programs that were added in response to COVID-19 were mandatory programs (e.g.

unemployment insurance)

- The Medicare OASDI & HI Trust Funds were estimated to be depleted by 2026, however, increases due to COVID now put the date closer to 2023. The Social Security Trust Fund is estimated to be depleted by 2034.



PANEL DISCUSSION

- The 2020 election showed that there are pockets throughout the country that elevate the importance of building political power in indigenous communities. Exit polls showed that indigenous communities are experiencing the same issues as many other communities of color. There is potential for a multicultural coalition to advance these shared priorities.
- If the HI Trust Fund runs out of money in 2023, as predicted, it would mean about a 17% reduction in payments to providers. It is likely that funding will be restored before it runs out, either by reducing payments or increasing taxes.
- A federal mandate to expand Medicaid and Medicare is possible but could be very difficult to get through Congress, even with a slim Democratic majority in the Senate. The Biden Administration could issue executive orders around expanding coverage through the public option and other pathways.
- We need to keep looking for ways to show State and Federal budget makers that expanding healthcare access reduces overall hospitalizations and costs over time.
- Changing the narrative around Medicaid, reducing the stigma, and rebranding it as a lifeline for millions of people across the country will be essential in advocating for it.
- The vital importance of a strong safety net has been far more apparent during a pandemic and it will not go away when the pandemic goes away.

Finding real solutions with the federal government and state government working together, is more important now than ever.

- The U.S. healthcare system is incredibly complex, and it could be simplified, streamlined, and made more efficient. Health care advocates need to find some common ground and space to work together to begin building towards a better solution.
- Funding community-driven work, elevating community stories, and allowing community-led organizations to drive the work can help bring oral health into healthcare advocacy conversation and make it part of an overall system of wellbeing. Also, showing the direct impact of oral health on job security, success in school, and other economic factors. Consider how much more powerful your investments can be by maximizing and leveraging partnerships.

INTERESTING READS

- [New CMS Rule Would Weaken Families First Continuous Coverage Protection in Medicaid](#)
- [The Impact of Medicaid Expansion on States' Budgets](#)
- [Discrimination Reduces Utilization of Routine Dental Care](#)



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