



Advocacy**ALERT** FOR n4a MEMBERS & ALLIES

House Passes Short-Term Money Follows the Person Extension

Ask Your Senators to Approve the Bill This Week!

December 17, 2018

Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the bipartisan IMPROVE Act (H.R. 7217) by an overwhelming margin of 400-11. The bill includes a provision extending the Medicaid Money Follows the Person (MFP) program for three months. This short-term patch would help states bridge the current funding gap until Congress hopefully approves a longer authorization. **Advocates should urge their Senators to support the IMPROVE Act, which could be considered in that chamber this week!**

Since 2005, the MFP program has been instrumental in helping tens of thousands of older adults and people with disabilities transition from institutional settings to the community. New funding for MFP program expired in 2016, although states have been able to spend down existing MFP funding until the end of 2018—which is less than two weeks away! Advocates and lawmakers have been working to promote bipartisan bills in both the House and Senate that would provide additional funding for states to continue rebalancing their Medicaid long-term services and supports (LTSS) programs.

Since the MFP program began, nearly 90,000 people have used the program to transition from an institutional setting back to their community. Ongoing funding is essential to maintain the MFP program infrastructure in many states. While n4a and other national, state and local aging advocates have rallied around the importance of a long-term reauthorization for the MFP program, end-of-the-year and lame-duck congressional dynamics made that bid unlikely, hence the three-month extension.

Current Status of MFP Reauthorization

Earlier this year, Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Representatives Brett Guthrie (R-KY) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI) introduced the bipartisan EMPOWER Care Act (S. 2227 and H.R. 5306) that would reauthorize MFP for five years. In the fall, the House Energy and Commerce Committee passed a shorter, one-year extension of the program.

Unfortunately, concerns about cost and the lack of an obvious legislative vehicle for the proposal meant that in order to provide any continuity for the program, lawmakers must first pass a shorter-term solution to keep funding flowing until the next Congress convenes in January.

The House passed this legislative patch last week, and **the Senate could take action through a process known as unanimous consent (reserved for non-controversial bills) this week, but only if advocates make their voices heard now!**

How You Can Take Action Now!

- **Reach out and tell your Senators why MFP is so important to older adults and people with disabilities in your community!** We are asking that state advocates call both the DC and local offices of your Senators and ask them to pass the IMPROVE Act. **Outreach on MFP is especially important to Republican Senators Toomey (PA), Cruz (TX), Paul (KY) and McConnell (KY), who serve on committees that have jurisdiction over this issue.**

Make sure to personalize your outreach with local facts about MFP—which may not be called MFP in your state—and success stories you can share. Make sure to clarify how MFP benefits older adults and people with disabilities in your community.

- **Make sure to say THANK YOU if your Senator has signed on as a supporter of MFP!** If your Senator has already cosponsored the [EMPLOYEE POWER Care Act](#), thank them for their support and make sure to let them know that the Senate could pass the IMPROVE Act via Unanimous Consent this week!
- **Engage your community!** Please encourage your providers, advisory boards and partners, and consumers to take action by engaging your Senators! Use the sample text below to encourage stakeholders to call and/or email their Senators. U.S. Capitol Switchboard: 202.224.3121. Email: www.senate.gov.

MFP gives people the right to decide where they live and receive home and community-based services and supports. It provides assistance to help older adults and people with disabilities transition out of institutional settings back to the community, regaining their independence while saving Medicaid dollars.

Since 2005, MFP has assisted more than 88,000 people with moving back to the community, and has helped 44 states improve access to home and community-based services. MFP is a program that helps everyone win: individuals regain their independence, and state and federal governments save money because it costs less to provide services and supports in the community rather than in an institution.

Congress must extend funding for MFP or states will be unable to continue this vital cost-effective program that promotes independence for older adults and people with disabilities. Please consider supporting the IMPROVE Act (H.R. 7217) today!

Thank you for your advocacy on this important issue!

--

If you have questions or concerns about this *Advocacy Alert* or n4a's policy positions, please contact Autumn Campbell at acampbell@n4a.org and Amy Gotwals at agotwals@n4a.org.