



Highlights from the Hill

July 2016

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Congressional Appropriations Bills Suggest Funding for CDC and NIH

On July 14, the House Appropriations Committee approved the fiscal year 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS) Appropriations bill, which would provide an increase in several critical research initiatives. We are encouraged that the committee included \$33.3 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), \$1.25 billion above the fiscal year 2016 enacted level and \$2.25 billion above the President's discretionary budget request. Furthermore, the Brain Research through Application of Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative would be funded at \$195 million, an increase of \$45 million from the previous year.

On June 7, the Senate Committee on Appropriations, Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee passed their fiscal year 2017 Labor, HHS & Education Appropriations bill, which includes an increase in funding for epilepsy programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The appropriations bills must be passed by the full House and Senate, respectively, before they can go to conference for Senators and Representatives to compromise on language. The Epilepsy Foundation strongly supports federal funding for epilepsy research and programs, and we will continue to monitor the appropriations process for fiscal year 2017.

Epilepsy Foundation Urges Congress to Support CARERS Act

On July 12, the Epilepsy Foundation joined several other patient organizations in a group letter led by Americans for Safe Access (ASA) to Senators Grassley (IA) and Leahy (VT)

and Representatives Pitts (PA) and Green (TX), urging them to bring the *Compassionate Access, Research Expansion, and Respect States (CARERS) Act* for a committee vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee and the House Energy and Commerce, Health Subcommittee.

The Epilepsy Foundation strongly supports federal cannabis legislation that would lift federal barriers to cannabis research and create safe, legal access to medical cannabis in the states, including the CARERS Act.

You can view the letter and urge your members of Congress to support the CARERS Act at www.epilepsy.com/cannabis.

Epilepsy Foundation, spoke at a briefing where she explained the Foundation's support of the CARERS Act. Senators Cory Booker (NJ) and Kirsten Gillibrand (NY) also spoke on the importance of passing the CARERS Act and removing federal barriers to research while protecting individuals in states with medical cannabis programs.

Senators and Patient Groups Oppose Changes to Six Protected Classes

Senators Grassley (IA) and Brown (OH) wrote a letter to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) opposing the recent recommendations from the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) which would weaken the six protected classes. Bloomberg News recently highlighted the letter and the dangers of weakening the six protected classes, and featured a quote from Angela Ostrom, our chief legal officer and vice president public policy, reiterating our strong opposition to MedPAC's recommendations. You can read the article at <http://bit.ly/BNACMS>.

Legislation Would Weaken Americans with Disabilities Act

H.R. 3765, the *ADA Education and Reform Act of 2015*, recently passed out of the House Judiciary Committee and now makes its way to the full House. This legislation would eliminate the responsibility of businesses to know their obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and place the burden of ensuring that businesses remain accessible on people with disabilities. The Epilepsy Foundation strongly opposes this legislation and will continue to monitor the bill as it moved forward.

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