

## Federal Policy Update for Los Angeles

February 13, 2013

By Josh Rovner, National Assembly on School-Based Health Care

- Still looking at a difficult fiscal environment for appropriations
- Initial question is, what happens with the sequester?
  - Domestic discretionary programs would see, in total, a 5 percent across-the-board cut. These cuts would start on March 2.
  - For SBHCs, this is not as awful as it is for other programs because – and this is a lousy piece of good news – our programs don't depend on the discretionary budget the way that we want them to
  - For those of you sponsored by Community Health Centers, CHCs are looking at a \$167 million reduction. And there are other programs that support SBHCs – Title V (Maternal and Child Block Grants) and Title X (Family Planning Grants and Teen Pregnancy Prevention grants that would feel the impact.
  - But the good news – and this really is good news -- is that these across-the-board cuts would not impact Medicaid which is not in that category of "discretionary programs." Moreover, the White House has been stronger in its defense of Medicaid, even in comparison to defenses of Medicare, than ever.
- As of now, it looks like no one can stop this train. Obama and many Democrats would like a combination of targeted spending cuts plus tax increases. Many Republicans would like to see all the defense cuts rescinded and the entire weight of the sequester fall on domestic programs, while other Republicans are so eager to cut the federal budget that they are willing to accept the sequester.
- If it takes place, the constrained funding environment would make additional funding for SBHCs very difficult as we'd be fighting for a piece of a smaller pie. So, that's March 2
- On or before March 27, Congress will have to address the budget for the rest of Fiscal Year 2013. Now, Congress was supposed to pass an FY13 budget by now and the President would sign it, given that FY13 started last October. But instead of doing that, they passed a Continuing Resolution – that's a type of spending bill that leaves spending unchanged from the prior year's budget – for the first six months of FY13. The last time there was a government shutdown, back in the Clinton-Gingrich years, it was because no budget was passed, so this is a real possibility again.
- If we make it past that hurdle, we expect to see the President's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2014 around the beginning of April. That's when we'll find out if the President included funding for SBHCs in his budget. And, either way, we'll be focusing on the appropriations committees to get funded.
- We're more likely to be successful in the Senate than the House. And, in California, that means Senator Feinstein. I've been in touch with Alice Ricks at the California Health Centers Association, and she's been gathering dozens of signatures of school superintendents in support of the advocacy campaign. We're incredibly pleased that John Deasy has signed on that that effort.
- Elsewhere – outside of the budget, that is, NASBHC submitted its comments on the President's plan to prevent gun violence. There's a lot to like in there. Now, we at NASBHC haven't taken a stance on provisions about background checks or ammunition bans. But we believe that SBHCs align with many of the plans' goals when it comes to expanding access to mental health care and identifying those in need of mental health care. You can see that response on the front page of NASBHC's website.