

HLB's Health Equity Essentials Update

Insights

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On behalf of the Hooper, Lundy & Bookman's Health Equity Task Force, here is our most recent HLB Health Equity Essentials Update.

- **Millions Losing Medicaid During "Unwinding" of Pandemic Era Policy** – Approximately ¼ of the U.S. population that was enrolled in Medicaid prior to the pandemic have since [lost coverage](#). The federal ban under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) placed on disenrolling Medicaid beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic was lifted in March 2023, freeing states to reexamine whether current enrollees continue to satisfy eligibility requirements – resulting in disenrollment of more than [20 million people](#). Unable to afford or qualify for coverage elsewhere, many former Medicaid beneficiaries have now been added to the ranks of the uninsured. Not surprisingly, minorities and children – the latter of which comprise nearly ½ of Medicaid/CHIP enrollees – are [disproportionately impacted](#) by this policy shift. Some states ostensibly claim that loss of coverage in many instances is due to procedural issues, such as failure to submit required paperwork, including proof of residency.
- **Reproductive Health Update – Arizona Supreme Court's Abortion Ruling** – On April 9, the Arizona Supreme Court, in its *Planned Parenthood Arizona, Inc. v. Hayes* decision, [upheld](#) a [state law dating back to 1864](#), which makes it a felony to perform, or even help a woman obtain, an abortion at any time following conception. The one exception is if the procedure is to save the pregnant woman's life. Despite the Court's decision, Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes has vowed that she will not enforce the abortion ban. Fervent reaction to the Arizona decision quickly made its way up to President Joe Biden, who [decreed](#) Arizona's abortion law as "cruel" and an affront to women's reproductive rights.

SCOTUS EMTALA Oral Arguments. This week, the Supreme Court will hear arguments in *Idaho v. United States* and *Moyle v. United States*, cases asking whether the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) preempts, under certain emergency circumstances, an Idaho law banning most abortions. The Idaho argument is April 24 at 10 am ET, with an expected ruling by the end of the Supreme Court's term in June. Read more about these cases [here](#).

- **DHCS & CHCF Developing Health Equity Roadmap** – California's Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), along with the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), continue to make progress on their recently launched [Health Equity Roadmap](#) initiative to advance health equity among Medi-Cal enrollees and eliminate health disparities they currently face. This endeavor is an ongoing, phased process, which seeks to create a more equitable and person-centered health delivery system for California's largest public health program.

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What is most promising about this latest policy-driven effort is that DHCS/CHCF are directly engaging Medi-Cal members from across the state to hear their concerns and better understand what they perceive is working with the current program and what needs fixing. In addition, DHCS/CHCF are working with payors, local governments, providers, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to help pinpoint opportunities that will clearly lead to advancing health equity among the most underserved of Medi-Cal's beneficiaries, especially BIPOC communities.

- *EY Health Equity Outlook Report Depicts Promising Findings on Health Equity Prioritization* – EY's second annual [Health Equity Outlook Report](#) reflects responses to a survey of 500 health equity executives from various facets of the health care industry. Based upon the results, 73% anticipate health equity to become a higher priority for their entities during the next year, with the majority anticipating increased investments. Nonetheless, the main challenges these leaders face in advancing health equity in their organizations are competing priorities, a lack of financial commitment, and absence of an articulated purpose for health equity.
- *Upcoming Events* –
 1. On April 25, CHCF will host an event to examine artificial intelligence's (AI's) role in health care, with a particular focus on algorithmic bias and access to AI in communities that have been historically marginalized, as well as discuss regulatory and policy considerations for ensuring that health equity is incorporated into AI platforms. Both in-person and virtual attendance options are available, [but tickets are going fast](#).
 2. Next month, CMS will be hosting its second annual [Health Equity Conference](#) on May 29-30 in Bethesda, MD. Although in-person attendance at this free event has reached capacity, you may join the waitlist, livestream via the HHS Live website, or attend virtually.