

## 2022 Advocacy Wins

# 46

Hill Meetings

# 12

Comment Letters

# 27

Sign-on Letters

### B THE CHANGE ACTION CENTER



## 156

messages sent to Congress and other policy makers



## 354

Petition signers



## 138

Written public comments



## 384

New subscribers



## 1,540

Total subscribers

### Get Involved!

Join [B the Change](#) for advocacy updates and action alerts.

Contact us at [advocate@hepb.org](mailto:advocate@hepb.org)

### Updated U.S. Public Health Service Corps Medical Standards

In December 2022, the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps announced it is updating its medical standards to accept future applicants living with chronic hepatitis B and HIV. Previously, HIV and hepatitis B infection were both considered disqualifying medical conditions. Working alongside partners, we successfully advocated for a change in this policy by meeting with senior administration official and Congressional champions, and getting language included in the FY 2022 House Labor-HHS Appropriations report urging the USPHS to allow officers with hepatitis B to serve in the Commissioned Corps.

### Community Project Funding: PA Center of Public Health Excellence

With the passage of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Omnibus Appropriations Act in March, the Hepatitis B Foundation received \$475,000 to create a Center of Public Health Excellence focused on hepatitis B elimination by providing expert resources, advice, training, capacity building and technical assistance for state and local partners on how to best prevent, treat and control hepatitis B and to increase the rate of adult vaccination and testing for hepatitis B. The [Center of Public Health Excellence](#) was one of nine community projects that Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick secured funding for in the FY 2022 Omnibus.

### FY23 Omnibus Sees an Increase for CDC, NIH

The FY 2023 Omnibus also included a small increase of \$2 million for CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis (\$43 million total) and an increase of \$5 million for CDC's Eliminating Opioid Related Infectious Diseases Program (\$23 million total). The bill also appropriated \$1.5 billion for the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). Additionally, NIH funding was increased to \$47.5 billion, including \$150 million to help address the low rate of success of grant applications to the National Cancer Institute and \$88 million to address health disparities.

### Implementing Universal Hepatitis B Recommendations

In April 2022, universal hepatitis B vaccination for adults aged 19-59 became [official policy](#). HBF immediately embarked on a dissemination campaign to raise awareness of the new recommendation amongst various stakeholder groups. HBF also launched the Hepatitis B Vaccination and Screening Advisory Council, which is comprised of key stakeholders from the provider and patient advocate communities and hepatitis B experts. The Council held a 2-day meeting in June to develop implementation strategies for universal hepatitis B vaccination and screening (expected in 2023), and will publish their findings in a white paper.



# Federal Funding for Hepatitis B and Liver Cancer

## *Hepatitis Appropriations Policy Summit Recap and Advocacy Training Toolkit*

As members of the Hepatitis Appropriations Partnership (HAP), we joined our national advocacy partners in organizing a series of [virtual micro-summits](#) to unpack the key policy issues facing the hepatitis community and spark meaningful conversations with federal partners, health department staff, hepatitis experts, and community advocates. Topics included: Hepatitis and Health Equity, Hepatitis and Maternal/Child Health, Overdose and Hepatitis, and Ending the Public Health Threat of Viral Hepatitis: Federal Perspectives and Community Approaches. Additionally, HAP organizations collaborated on creating helpful series of [advocacy training videos](#).

## *Congressional Support for FY 2023 Funding and Report Language Priorities*

In April, we coordinated and helped gather support for two Congressional sign-on letters sent to the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS):

1. [FY23 Funding to Combat Viral Hepatitis and Eliminate Opioid-related Infectious Diseases](#) – Led by Rep. Hank Johnson and Rep. Grace Meng of the Congressional Hepatitis Caucus and signed by 34 representatives, this letter called for (1) increasing funding for viral hepatitis programs at the CDC to \$140 million, and (2) including at least \$150 million to fully fund the program to eliminate opioid-related infectious diseases in the FY23 LHHS appropriations bill.
2. [FY23 Hepatitis B Research and Treatment Efforts](#) – Led by Rep. Nydia Velazquez and signed by 12 representatives, this letter urged the LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee to include report language in their FY23 bill that supports hepatitis B vaccination and screening, hepatitis B and liver cancer research, and efforts to combat hepatitis B related discrimination.

## Federal Administration Meetings



*National Institutes of Health*

*Office of Management and Budget*

*White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders*

*United States Office of Science and Technology Policy*

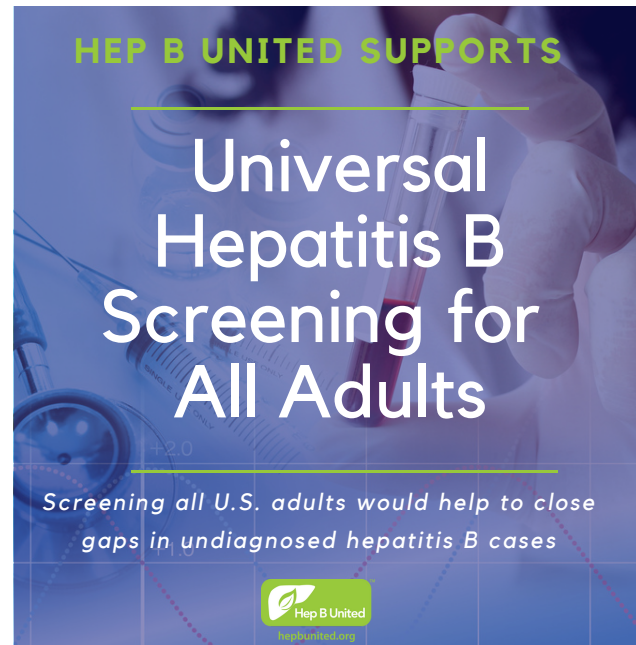
## *FY 2023 Appropriations Report Language*

Each year, HBF writes and submits language to legislators, and [advocates](#) for Congressional support to include this language in the House and Senate Appropriation Reports. On June 30, the House Appropriations Committee approved the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Labor-HHS bill that funds the health programs of HHS, and on July 27, the Senate Appropriations Committee Majority also released their FY 2023 bills and accompanying reports. Both the House and Senate included a \$13.5 million increase for the Division of Viral Hepatitis at the CDC, and the bill reports included language, advocated for by HBF, that prioritizes vaccination and screening for hepatitis B under HRSA Health Centers, hepatitis elimination efforts (vaccination, screening, surveillance, outreach, communications, etc.) under CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis, research toward better treatments and a cure for hepatitis B and liver cancer across the NIH, and coordinated hepatitis B adult vaccination implementation efforts across HHS.

## Screening & Vaccination

### *Advocating for Universal Adult Hepatitis B Screening*

The CDC is expected to release a final recommendation for a one-time universal adult hepatitis B screening in early 2023. However, the new recommendation will not be aligned with the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendation, which many insurance companies use to determine which services will be covered. We led a sign-on letter supported by **39 organizations** asking USPSTF to change their current recommendation for hepatitis B screening from high-risk adults to a one-time, universal test for all adults.



## Treatment Access

### *Campaign to Re-add Vemlidy Back to Optum Health Insurance Plan*

In July, Optum removed Vemlidy (tenofovir alafenamide, TAF) as a covered medication for treating chronic hepatitis B from its health insurance plan. We launched a [petition](#) against this decision and expressed concerns in a [sign-on letter](#) supported by **36 other organizations**, as well as a letter from HBF's Scientific and Medical Advisory Board. Optum replied with an explanation of their decision and why they are still choosing NOT to add Vemlidy back to their formulary. In response, we compiled additional data and comments in a [follow-up letter](#) signed by **52 organizations**, again urging Optum to reconsider. This was sent along with another letter from HBF advisors and a copy of the **230+ petition signatures and comments**.



## Addressing Health Disparities and Discrimination



### Congressional Letters Urge Biden Administration to End Discriminatory Military Policy

As part of an ongoing [effort](#) supported by HBF/HBU, letters signed by **31** U.S. House Representatives and **six** U.S. Senators were sent to President Biden calling for the Department of Defense to update their policies and personnel management instructions to reflect the most current scientific guidelines for HIV and hepatitis B management and treatment.

### Congressional Support for National African Immigrant & Refugee HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Awareness (NAIRHHA) Day

The co-chairs of the Congressional Hepatitis Caucus, Congressman Hank Johnson (GA-04) and Congresswoman Grace Meng (NY-06), along with the chair of the Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus, Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA-13), sent a [letter](#) with 11 House colleagues to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services requesting support for the designation of September 9th as “National African Immigrant and Refugee HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Awareness (NAIRHHA) Day.” Additionally, over **100** individuals and organizations voiced their support for NAIRHHA Day recognition by signing a community-led [petition](#) and [organizational support letter](#).

### Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2022

In April, the Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2022 was [introduced by Rep. Robin Kelly](#) with a subtitle dedicated to Viral Hepatitis and Liver Cancer Control and Prevention that was developed/updated with input from the HBF as a member of the HEAA Community Working Group.

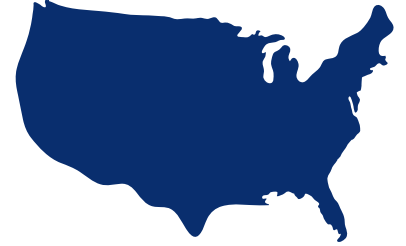


**State Advocacy Meetings** – This year, we began hosting monthly meetings for Hep B United partners, patients, providers, and other community advocates interested in/working on hepatitis B advocacy at the state level to share updates, highlight successful campaigns, exchange resources, get feedback on ideas, discuss challenges/barriers, connect with other advocates, and help identify opportunities for hepatitis B state advocacy across the U.S.

**Regional Advocacy Trainings** – We collaborated with Hep B United partners in the Mid-Atlantic, South, West, and Northeast to co-host three regional advocacy trainings focused on Getting Started in State Advocacy. These virtual workshops aimed to provide a foundation for organizations and advocates interested in getting more involved in advocacy efforts at the state level.

**Viral Hepatitis Elimination Planning** – We worked to increase hepatitis B community involvement in state viral hepatitis elimination planning workgroups.

## State Advocacy



## Global Advocacy

### **Hepatitis B and Hepatitis Delta Global Community Advisory Boards**

As pre-clinical and clinical research efforts lead to progress towards development of a functional cure for hepatitis B and effective treatments for hepatitis delta, it is critical to include community perspectives and experiences in this process. This year, the Hepatitis B Foundation created two global Community Advisory Boards (CABs), comprised of 23 CAB members who applied and were selected from 19 countries. The CAB membership reflects the demographics of chronic hepatitis B and D globally, and emphasizes the inclusion of traditionally under-represented communities. Since July, the CABs have been preparing to start meeting with drug and clinical trial developers in 2023, with the goals of integrating community voices, inputs, and recommendations; ensuring patient-centered decision making; and promoting awareness and engagement on drug and clinical trials.



### **Urging Gavi to Support Hepatitis B Birth Dose**

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, is an international partnership created to improve access to new and underused vaccines for children living in the world's poorest countries. Previously, Gavi committed to providing support for countries to introduce hepatitis B birth dose, particularly in areas where mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B is high; however, they have not yet followed through on this. Over the past few months, the Hepatitis B Foundation sent a letter to the Gavi, met virtually with Gavi's Policy Team and Vaccine Programmes Team, and signed on to an open letter published in The Lancet urging Gavi to start their hepatitis B birth dose campaign. We will continue to pressure Gavi through advocacy.

### **Learn More!**

*Click the links below to access our archived advocacy documents.*

[Comments and Letters](#)

[Webinars](#)

