

## Legislative Session Recap



The 2020 regular session of the West Virginia State Legislature resulted in the most impactful expansion of health care coverage ever passed through the state legislative process and signed into law by the governor.

Led by the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, Senate Bill 648 expanded dental care to adult Medicaid recipients over the age of 21. This landmark achievement was made possible thanks to the broad skillset and reach of the Center and our coalition partners – we collectively engaged in critical research and analysis, coalition organization and outreach, and advocacy and government affairs in the fight to make this legislation a reality.

In the end, the bill passed the West Virginia Senate 32-2. The House followed suit 85-12 and Governor Justice signed the bill on March 25, 2020. The program began in January of 2021 and will surely provide life-transforming care to hundreds of thousands of our friends and neighbors.

The WVCBP wishes to thank our coalition partners for their invaluable support via in-person lobby days, grassroots activism, and bringing directly impacted individuals to the Capitol to educate lawmakers on the critical importance of access to dental care to leading a healthy and happy life.

Beyond SB 648, the 2020 legislative session brought additional significant wins in health care access, including capping the maximum monthly co-pays for insulin at \$100 for West Virginians who have private health coverage (HB 4543) and providing nearly \$20 million in the FY 2021 budget bill (SB 150) to clear the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Waiver waitlist, providing services to over 1,000 individuals with these disabilities.

Combined with the swift defeat of Medicaid reporting requirements (HB 4018) for the second year in a row and the defeat of Attorney General Morrisey's sham pre-existing conditions bill (SB 284) in the House Health Committee, the 2020 regular session served as one of the most impactful in recent memory for health policy progress, with the staff of the WVCBP leading the way on research, analysis, and advocacy.

### **Other 2020 legislative successes that the WVCBP was involved in alongside our coalition partners.**

#### **FOOD FOR ALL COALITION**

- Passage of the Senior Shared Table Bill (HB 4447), which provides more flexibility for Senior and Community Centers regarding how they can use leftover food from congregate meal programs.
- A \$1 million increase in the budget line item for West Virginia's two food banks.

#### **CRIMINAL LAW REFORM COALITION**

- Led by WVCBP advisory committee member Lida Shepherd and WVCBP board member Rick Wilson, HB 4958 ended the practice of suspending people's driver's licenses as punishment for unpaid court fines and fees. Instead of suspending driver's licenses, which has the perverse effect of trapping people in a cycle of debt and unemployment, the courts will be mandated to offer payment plans for those who cannot pay their entire sum upfront.

#### **TAX AND BUDGET COALITION**

- Tax policy was a mixed bag during the 2020 session, but the major threats to the revenues that sustain vital public services were defeated in large part due to the advocacy of the WVCBP. These threats included attempts to lower natural gas property taxes (SB 655), gradually eliminate the personal income tax (HB 4892), and place a constitutional amendment on the ballot that could drastically reduce local property taxes critical to providing services for counties and municipalities across the state (SJR 9).

## OUR VISION

**A prosperous West Virginia where everyone has a meaningful and equitable opportunity to thrive.**



## RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Just a week after the 2020 state legislative session ended, COVID-19 was declared a national emergency. On March 23, 2020 the state's first case of community spread of the virus was followed by statewide Stay at Home orders. School and business closures, while critical for public health, led to immediate consequences for West Virginia residents, including increases in economic insecurity, hunger, and lack of access to basic needs. The WVCBP team immediately shifted our focus to advocating for the needs of West Virginians to be addressed as our state was taking the steps needed to protect the health of our people.

At the state level, we led development and publication of a sign-on letter urging state officials to strengthen supports for families, many of which were enacted, including waiving insurance fees for COVID-19 testing, expanding telehealth coverage, waiving work search requirements for unemployment insurance benefits, and expanding eligibility for child care services. We also began tracking data related to the economic impacts of the pandemic, including unemployment claims, jobs numbers, SNAP and Medicaid enrollment, and jail and prison population data. We published timely research on the impacts of the pandemic, including analyses of West Virginia's essential workers, COVID outbreaks in our state's jails and prisons, and economic and jobs impacts across our state. The WVCBP's advocacy efforts included urging Governor Justice to invest federal Coronavirus Relief Funds where they were most needed, including direct aid to families and businesses, utility and rent relief, feeding programs, and expanded testing and tracing efforts in congregate facilities. Additionally we worked with partners to urge the state to reduce the jail and prison population as a critical public health measure.

At the federal level, we advocated for passage of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and for flexibilities in federal safety net programs to ensure that the basic needs of families were met throughout the pandemic. We also provided education and outreach to West Virginians to ensure that households were aware of these benefits.



## Our Major Publications

Mountain State Women Aren't Always Free: The State of Women's Incarceration in West Virginia

State of Working West Virginia 2020: The State of Racial Inequality

The Case Against Austerity: Why Protecting Investments in West Virginia Families and Communities is Key to COVID-19 Recovery

The State of West Virginia's Immigrants  
Smoothing the Transition: A Medicaid Buy-in Could Reduce Churn and Expand Health Insurance Coverage to Thousands of West Virginians

A CHIP Buy-in Could Help West Virginia Achieve Universal Coverage for Kids

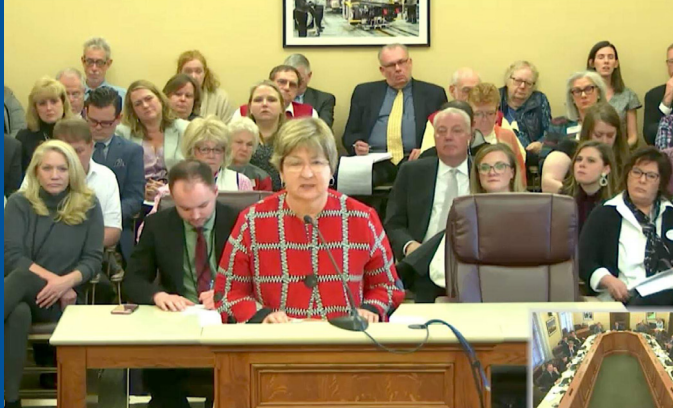
West Virginia's Prescription Transparency Law Can Address Rising Drug Costs

Trouble Ahead: The West Virginia FY 2021 Proposed Budget

Adding Adult Dental Coverage to Medicaid Can Improve Health in West Virginia

Who Pays? Rethinking West Virginia's Tax System





## ELEVATING THE STORIES OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED BY POLICY DECISIONS

Much of our legislative and advocacy successes in 2020 were due to the intentional inclusion of those most impacted by policy decisions in the advocacy process. Through our work with the Health Care for All WV coalition, we were able to co-coordinate surveys of West Virginians on which health issues to prioritize and co-hosted multiple lobby days and trainings, allowing West Virginians who would benefit from our proactive agenda items to speak for themselves and share their stories with legislators, policymakers, and the media.

Advocate Kim Jones testified in front of the House Health and Human Resources Committee about the importance of insulin co-pay caps, showing legislators her insulin receipts and how the cost had risen significantly in recent years despite no changes to the medication or dosage. Her key testimony ensured that the bill passed out of the committee in time to make it through the legislative process. Additionally, advocate and health expert Nancy Tyler testified on the insulin cap bill when it crossed over to the Senate Health Committee, providing a critical patient perspective when much of the testimony ahead of her had focused on pharmaceutical profits.

The WVCBP also helped coordinate medical professionals to speak on behalf of health bills, most notably SB 648, which provides dental benefits to adults on Medicaid. Dr. Raj Khanna, oral and maxillofacial surgeon at Marshall University, testified in front of multiple committees on the importance of basic dental benefits and oral care in preventing much more serious and costly health needs.

## BITTERSWEET CHANGES & TEAM GROWTH



2020 brought significant staffing changes to the WVCBP. In July, founding executive director Ted Boettner left the Center to pursue a new opportunity as senior researcher at the Ohio River Valley Institute. And in December, longtime operations manager Linda Frame retired. Ted and Linda were the WVCBP's longest serving staff and while they will be greatly missed, their transitions have provided opportunities for new staff to step up to these positions. In October, after an extensive search by the WVCBP's board of directors, Kelly Allen was named executive director. Kelly has been with the Center for over three years, leading the organization's health and family policy portfolios and serving as policy outreach coordinator, director of policy engagement, and deputy director.



Additionally, three new staff joined the WVCBP in 2020. Renee Alves was hired as communications and operations coordinator, leading the team's strategic communications strategy, special event coordination, and grants and operations management. Quenton King came on as the WVCBP's first ever criminal justice policy analyst. His research and organizing expertise has been a significant asset in our proactive criminal legal reform work and advocacy for justice-involved individuals to be protected and prioritized throughout the pandemic. Rhonda Rogombe joined the team in the fall of 2020 as a health policy analyst. Rhonda's work includes advocating for improvements to Medicaid that address enrollment and other barriers that West Virginians face, with an emphasis on Black West Virginians and other communities of color. Rhonda has also broadened her portfolio to lead the WVCBP's research on TANF, public health, and other safety net programs.

## Our Social Engagement

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
FB LIKES	1,759	2,119	2,872	3,300	3,701
SUBSCRIBERS	1,974	2,039	2,521	2,839	4,434
FOLLOWERS	1,825	2,101	2,515	2,946	3,404
MEDIA HITS	164	258	153	90	153



# West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy

## OUR MISSION

The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy's mission is to use research and analysis to advance the well-being of West Virginia communities, and to promote and support the essential role of government in improving the quality of life in the state.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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(through September 2020)  
Our Future West Virginia

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### Kelly Allen

Executive Director  
(beginning in October 2020)

### Renee Alves

Communications  
& Operations Coordinator

### Ted Boettner

Executive Director  
(through July 2020)

### Seth DiStefano

Policy Outreach Director

### Linda Frame

Operations Manager

### Quenton King

Criminal Justice Policy Analyst

### Sean O'Leary

Senior Policy Analyst

### Bryan Phillips

Summer Research Associate

### Rhonda Rogombe

Health Policy Analyst

### Ryan Stewart

Summer Research Associate

## COALITIONS

### Call to Action for Racial Inequality

### Food for All

### Health Care for All WV

### Legislative Action Team for Children and Families

### Paid Leave Works for WV

### Race Matters

### West Virginia Criminal Law Reform Coalition

### WV Tax and Budget Coalition

### West Virginians Together for Medicaid

### WV United

## Expenditures

### General Program

\$701,187

### Management & General

\$48,272

### Fundraising

\$5,254

**\$754,713 Total**

## 2020 Funders

The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy thankfully acknowledges the following foundations and organizations who financially contributed to its work in 2020:

- Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
- Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
- Stoneman Family Foundation
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- Appalachian Community Fund
- Sisters Health Foundation
- MAZON
- Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation
- Heinz Endowments
- Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- RECLAIM
- Vera Institute of Justice
- West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
- Good News Mountaineer Garage
- Cabin Creek Health Systems
- American Federation of Teachers West Virginia
- West Virginia School Service Personnel Association
- West Virginia Council of Churches
- WVU Institute for Labor Studies and Research
- Our Future West Virginia
- American Friends Service Committee
- West Virginia Education Association
- ACLU of West Virginia
- Planned Parenthood South Atlantic
- West Virginia FREE
- National Association of Social Workers - WV Chapter
- West Virginia Citizen Action Education Fund
- West Virginia Kids Count



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State Priorities  
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