

# MEA-Retired Tribune

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July, 2021

## Members take off masks and take care of business

Welcome to July and to summer! In the last few weeks, dramatic changes indicating a return to a relative “normal” have put smiles on many faces. Those smiles are something that we can now enjoy SEEING after months of wearing masks. Although masks are still required in some situations and recommended in others, taking a breath of fresh air is a little easier, isn’t it?

Last week, three dozen MEA-Retired members represented our state affiliate, joining over 300 members from throughout the country at the virtual NEA-Retired Annual Meeting. In addition to approving the business items and bylaw amendments at hand; delegates heard speeches from NEA-Retired President Sarah Borgman, NEA officers and candidates for office; donated to both the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education and the Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Fund and were inspired to use their voices to protect voting rights for all. I had the honor of presenting the Moment of Remembrance at the end of the first day.

We are so appreciative of the outstanding work done by MEA-Retired leaders at the national level: outgoing NEA-Retired Secretary Dan Rudd; NEA Board of Directors member Barb Schram, who is running for another term on the Board; and Sid Kardon, who was reelected to the NEA Resolutions Committee.

Yesterday, our MEA-Retired delegation joined over 5700 active and retired members at the first day of the 100<sup>th</sup> NEA Representative Assembly, being held virtually through Saturday. Delegates participate in a daily Michigan caucus webinar and proceed to the RA platform to conduct the business of the association. So far, so good. Many thanks to all of our delegates who are taking the time to represent our organization at this, the largest meeting of a deliberative democratic body in the world!

In the last 16 months, we have learned that despite technical glitches, several twists and turns in the learning curve and the exciting and sometimes daunting challenge of old dogs learning new tricks, we CAN do business and connect with others socially on virtual platforms. At the same time, we are excited about our world opening up again and the return to taking care of business—and fun—in person. Aren’t hugs the best?

## MEA President Herbart comments on passage of school budget

The following statement can be attributed to MEA President Paula Herbart in response to yesterday’s passing of the 2021-22 K-12 school budget by the Michigan Legislature:

“Equalizing the state foundation grants for our children’s education is a major step in the right direction for school funding. We appreciate the leadership from Gov. Whitmer to bring forward this important change, and for lawmakers from both parties embracing a fix to a long-standing injustice.

“This is by no means an end to the fight for adequate and equitable funding for our schools. After decades of inequity and underinvestment in education, we must remain committed to fixing our school funding system so it provides the resources for every student to succeed, no matter where they live or what their learning needs are.

“In concert with critical federal pandemic relief funding, this budget gives us a chance to show our communities what can be accomplished for our students when schools are provided with funding to be successful – and what still needs to be done to provide a world-class education for every Michigan student.”

At \$16.74 billion, the approved budget represents the largest ever investment in K-12 public schools in Michigan history. More importantly, it finally closes the gap in the per-pupil foundation allowance that has existed since Proposal A passed in 1994, bringing all districts to \$8,700 per pupil (an increase of between \$171 and \$589 per pupil, depending on the district and the funding formulas used).”

The bill also includes:

- \$285 million additional for the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System, as well as a \$560 million deposit into the MPSERS Retirement Obligation Reform Reserve Fund.
- \$100 million placed into the School Aid Stabilization Fund.
- \$168 million more for the Great Start Readiness Program, bringing that funding up to \$8,700 per pupil and helping another 22,000 eligible 4-year-olds access quality pre-school.
- \$240 million to help districts hire school nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers.
- NOTE: State funding for universities and community colleges were not included in this bill – action is still pending on those budgets.

### **From the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services:**

## **Improving home health services for seniors, people with disabilities**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a proposed rule that accelerates the shift from paying for home health services based on volume, to a system that incentivizes value and quality. The rule also seeks feedback on ways to attain health equity for all patients through policy solutions, including enhancing reports on Medicare/Medicaid dual eligible, disability status, people who are LGBTQ+; religious minorities; people who live in rural areas; and people otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

The CY 2022 Home Health Prospective Payment System (HH PPS) proposed rule addresses challenges facing Americans with Medicare who receive health care at home. The proposed rule also outlines nationwide expansion of the Home Health Value-Based Purchasing (HHVBP) Model to incentivize quality of care improvements without denying or limiting coverage or provision of Medicare benefits for all Medicare consumers, and updates to payment rates and policies under the HH PPS.

“Homebound Medicare patients face a unique set of challenges and barriers to getting the care they need,” said CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure. “Today’s announcement is a reaffirmation of our commitment to these older adults and people with disabilities who are counting on Medicare for the health care they need. This proposed rule would streamline service delivery and value quality over quantity – at a time when Americans need it most.”

The CMS Innovation Center (CMMI) developed the HHVBP Model, which began Jan. 1, 2016, to determine whether payment incentives for providing better quality of care with greater efficiency would improve the quality and delivery of home health care services to people with Medicare. The HHVBP Model's current participants comprise all Medicare-certified home health agencies (HHAs), providing services across nine randomly selected states. The Third Annual Evaluation Report of the participants' performance from 2016-2018 showed an average 4.6% improvement in HHAs' quality scores and an average annual savings of \$141 million to Medicare.

CMS announced Jan. 8, 2021 that the HHVBP model met the statutory requirements for expansion. CMS is proposing to expand the HHVBP Model nationwide effective Jan. 1, 2022. By expanding the HHVBP Model, CMS seeks to improve the beneficiary experience by providing incentives for HHAs to provide better quality of care with greater efficiency.

Additionally, the proposed rule would improve the Home Health Quality Reporting Program by removing or replacing certain quality measures to reduce burden and increase focus on patient outcomes.

CMS would also begin collecting data on two measures promoting coordination of care in the Home Health Quality Reporting Program effective Jan. 1, 2023 as well as measures under Long Term Care Hospital and Inpatient Rehabilitation Quality Reporting Programs effective Oct. 1, 2022. This would position the agency with data to monitor outcomes across diverse populations and support the recent Executive Order 13985 of Jan. 20, 2021, entitled "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government."

For a fact sheet on the proposed rule, visit: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/cms-proposes-calendar-year-2022-home-health-prospective-payment-system-rate-update-home-health-value>

To download the proposed rule can be downloaded from the Federal Register, visit at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/current>