

2023 ADVOCACY WINS

81

Hill Meetings

15

Sign-on Letters

B THE CHANGE ACTION CENTER

174

messages sent to
Congress and
other policy
makers

457

Petition signatures
sent to Pharmacy
Benefit Managers

Get Involved!

Join **B the Change** for
advocacy updates and action
alerts.

Questions? Contact us at
advocate@hepb.org.

CDC Recommends Universal Hepatitis B Screening for all Adults

In March, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released [updated hepatitis B screening recommendations](#). All adults 18 and older are now recommended to be screened for hepatitis B using the triple panel test. This marks the first time that the United States has a universal recommendation for hepatitis B screening and testing, and the first time that the CDC encourages the use of the main serologic markers for testing to give individuals the most accurate sense of their hepatitis B status.

Federal Government Officially Recognizes National African Immigrant and Refugee HIV & Hepatitis Awareness (NAIRHHA) Day

The Hepatitis B Foundation (HBF) and the Coalition Against Hepatitis for People of African Origin (CHIPO) joined the Multicultural AIDS Coalition (MAC) and Africans for Improved Access (AFIA) Program to successfully advocate for federal recognition of National African Immigrant and Refugee HIV & Hepatitis Awareness (NAIRHHA) Day. In September, Representatives Henry "Hank" Jr. Johnson, Nydia Velázquez, and Barbara Lee introduced a [resolution](#) officially designating September 9th as NAIRHHA Day. NAIRHHA Day also received formal recognition from the Department of Health and Human Services and is now listed on HIV.gov as an awareness day.

CVS Health Re-adds Coverage of Vemlidy

When CVS Health - the largest pharmacy benefit manager in the United States - removed insurance coverage for Vemlidy, the community rallied together to respond. The Foundation led petitions, mobilized advocates, and wrote multiple letters to the company's Chief Medical Officers while people who were directly impacted by the issue shared stories of their experiences trying to access the medication. After months of advocacy, CVS Health reinstated this critical drug back onto all of its formularies in December 2023.

Increasing Federal Support for Hepatitis B and Liver Cancer

Hepatitis B in FY 2024 Appropriations and President's Budget

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. In November, the House Appropriations Committee released its fiscal year (FY) 2024 Labor-HHS bill that funds the health programs of HHS. 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 the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, 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. Although the Congressional bill did not increase funding for the CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis, the President's Budget included an increase of \$11.5 million for the Division.



Back in Action on the Hill

HBF returned to Capitol Hill for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. In April, Hep B United (HBU) hosted a virtual Hill Day with advocates from across the country virtually meeting with their elected officials' offices to discuss their lived experiences living with hepatitis B or working to combat it in their communities, and how Congress could help them do their work. In May, HBF hosted a briefing on Capital Hill to educate legislators on the updated hepatitis B recommendations from the CDC and ask for support for HBU's advocacy priorities. Representative Hank Johnson (GA-4), Co-chair of the Congressional Hepatitis Caucus, made remarks encouraging his colleagues to support hepatitis B efforts. In July, following Hep B United's Annual Summit, HBU hosted an in-person Hill Day where nearly 50 partners visited offices all across Capitol Hill, continuing to drive home the message that more resources are needed to combat this disease.



Spotlight on HBF

Federal Meetings Here and Abroad

United States

As the U.S. moves towards eliminating hepatitis B, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been evaluating the reclassification of hepatitis B diagnostic tests. HBU, HBF, #justB storytellers, providers, and advocates submitted written comments and provided public testimony in support of moving the tests from class 3 to class 2. After extensive discussions during their public meeting, the FDA Committee recommended that the FDA could start the process of reclassifying four hepatitis B tests: 1) Qualitative HBV Antigen tests, 2) Qualitative HBV Antibody tests, 3) Quantitative Anti-HBs tests, and/or 4) Quantitative HBV Molecular tests. This reclassification would mean that companies that produce point-of-care (POC) tests for HBV will have the opportunity to apply for approval through a less cumbersome and less expensive approval process. The Committee's decision was a significant step in the path toward expanding access to simple and more accessible hepatitis B testing.



Nigeria

The Hepatitis B Foundation joined the Hepatitis Advocacy Foundation, the Delta State Ministry of Health (SHM), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Excellence Community Education and Welfare Scheme to pay an advocacy visit to Her Excellency, Deaconess Tobore Oborevwo, the First Lady and wife of the Governor of Delta State. Their purpose was to advocate for improved resources for hepatitis B. Following the visit to the First Lady, His Excellency, the Governor of Delta State approved the inclusion of free Hepatitis B and C screening for all pregnant women and added protections against discrimination of people living with hepatitis B and C into their HIV anti-discrimination laws within the state. Resources for this effort have been included under the Delta State Contributory Health Commission.

