President Trump’s First Address to a Joint Session of Congress

This past Tuesday, President Donald J. Trump delivered his first official address to a joint session of Congress. The message was one of “unity and strength” as President Trump stated in his opening remarks and many have also noted it was an attempt to provide Americans with a picture of the initial policies the administration will focus on to “Make America Great Again.” The President’s speech included a number of statements and frames around poverty, distressed communities, and commitments to uplift individuals and communities.

He emphasized the importance of addressing violence and substance addiction that “are pouring in and poisoning youth” by expanding treatment for those suffering with addictions. President Trump also outlined the administration’s principles for health care reform, urging Democrats and Republicans to “save Americans from Obamacare”. Some of the guiding principles for repealing (and replacing) or repairing the Affordable Care Act include ensuring Americans with preexisting conditions have access to coverage, a smooth transition for current exchange enrollees, and by shifting the current structure of Medicaid, stating that the administration will give governors “the flexibility they need with Medicaid.”

State flexibility is something many APHSA members have called for and are leveraging to target investment to the most critical needs in their states and communities. However, some analysts have noted caution regarding changes to Medicaid based on Congress’s long standing measures to shift Medicaid to a per capita or other fixed financing structure.

President Trump continued to emphasize his intent to create jobs, one of many references to keeping his campaign promises and noted the commitments of major companies he has met with over the last few weeks to invest in American companies and jobs.

The President also spoke about affordable child care and paid family leave, two issues APHSA is monitoring closely and working with members to advance.

Reactions to the speech have been mixed but most political analysts agree that Tuesday’s address provided additional insight into President Trump’s major priorities.