

Eli's Hospice Insider

Hospice News: New HHS Secretary Signals Potential Favor For Care In The Home

After a lengthy waiting period, particularly in light of the pandemic, **Xavier Becerra** has been sworn in as the 25th Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. "As Secretary, he will focus on ensuring that all Americans have health security and access to health care," HHS says in a release.

The Senate approved his nomination on March 18 along party lines, except for Sen. **Susan Collins** (Maine), the only Republican to vote "yes." Biden nominated Becerra on Dec. 7, 2020.

Hospice representatives have applauded signs that he would be supporting of their services. In response to a question on end-of-life care in his confirmation hearings, then-California Attorney General Becerra said "As someone who had his father live with him the last three years of his life, so that when he passed, he passed in his bed in my home, absolutely, I look forward to working with you on that," the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization notes in a release.



"Secretary Becerra's commitment during his confirmation hearing to expanding care for those facing serious and life-limiting illness demonstrates real leadership on a timely and critical issue," says NHPCO President **Edo Banach**. On the top of NHPCO's wish list under Becerra's term is a demonstration project for community-based palliative care at the CMS Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation.

Becerra also acknowledged in his hearings that providers in rural areas face unique challenges, such as travel, points out the National Association for Home Care & Hospice.

Becerra "made it clear in his hearings that ... he will be certain to support improvements in access to home and community-based services," NAHC President **William Dombi** says in a release. "This is especially crucial as the growing population of individuals of advanced age find a need for care that extends beyond the capabilities of the current health care system. We look forward to working with [HHS] to secure patient-centered health care in the care setting of choice, one's own home."

Becerra, whose mother was a Mexican immigrant, will be the first Latino HHS Secretary.