BROOKS-LASURE CONFIRMED TO LEAD CMS

On May 25th, the Senate confirmed Chiquita Brooks-LaSure as CMS administrator by a vote of 55-44, after her confirmation vote was delayed due to objections over a revoked Texas Medicaid waiver extension. She will be the first Black woman to lead the agency.

Brooks-LaSure will bring exchange expertise to the role of CMS administrator. She previously worked at CMS during the Obama administration and helped implement the Affordable Care Act. She also drafted pieces of the ACA during her time as a staffer on the House Ways & Means Committee, where she worked with HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, then a California representative.

The new administrator has advocated for policy that advances health equity, and particularly maternal health, throughout her career, signaling she’ll help the Biden administration work towards its health equity goals.

During her hearing in front of the Senate Finance Committee last month, Brooks-LaSure said she’d work with lawmakers and within CMS to turn lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic into permanent policies, though she emphasized the need to maintain program integrity when setting telehealth payment rates.

She also said during the hearing that she plans to work closely with states to make sure they understand CMS’ decisions when asked about the Biden administration’s revocation of at least four Medicaid work requirement waivers.

Additionally, Brooks-LaSure said she will work to quickly issue guidance on the ACA’s 1332 state innovation waivers, and to begin rulemaking on surprise billing. She aims to advance Biden’s agenda regarding a public option, as well.