

Impact Health Policy Weekly

Framing the week

Congress is beginning to reach its final sessions days before August recess, with the House planning to depart on Thursday, while the Senate's last scheduled day is July 31. This week, both chambers will continue their work on the FY appropriations process. The House Appropriations Committee has a full week of markups scheduled, and the Senate has teed up a vote for the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies bill. Following August recess, both chambers will return on September 2 and will have a just a few short weeks to wrap up the appropriations work.

Bipartisan Health Care Package

Republicans are seeking to revive last year's bipartisan health care package by the end of year that included proposals as such pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) reform and a two-year extension of the COVID-19 telehealth flexibilities. However, following the enactment of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act and the passage of the recissions package, Democrats' desire to work in a bipartisan way will hinge upon how Republicans will address the enhanced premium tax credits that are set to expire at the end of the year. While House Ways & Means Committee Chair Jason Smith (R-MO) recently stated that extending the tax credits was a nonstarter, several Senate Republicans, including Thom Tillis (R-NC), Josh Hawley (R-MO), Dan Sullivan (R-AK), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) are interested in Congressional action to extend the credits. Any significant action on a potential package will likely not occur until after the appropriations process is complete.

MAHA Update

Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Robert F. Kennedy Jr. named Matt Buckham as a new Acting Chief of Staff after who senior staffers left. Heather Flick Melanson and Hannah Anderson, who were both brought in by the Trump Administration, were fired by Secretary Kennedy last week. Buckham's experience is mostly at conservative think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and American Accountability Federation, and he has been working as the HHS White House liaison. Notably, the American Accountability Federation, which Buckham co-founded, developed a "DEI Watchlist" with pictures and details on HHS staffers who worked on issues like health equity or climate change or otherwise perceived to be part of DEI practices. This development is the latest in a series of changes, including to HHS advisory panel personnel and processes, that Secretary Kennedy is making to shape the agency according to his agenda.

International Health Regulations

Last week, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and Secretary of State Marco Rubio jointly [announced](#) the United States' formal rejection of the 2024 amendments to the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations (IHR), citing concerns over vague language that could grant the WHO excessive authority to impose global measures such as lockdowns or travel restrictions. The officials criticized the amendments as threats to national sovereignty, civil liberties, and constitutional rights, arguing they could lead to censorship and politically driven responses rather than effective public health actions. The decision aligns with President Trump's broader agenda to [withdraw](#) from the WHO,

halt funding, and reject binding international health commitments. The 12-month withdrawal process began in January through an Executive Order, and if finalized, the U.S. would not be bound by WHO pacts, including its recently [adopted](#) global pandemic accord to ensure poorer countries have access to vaccines.

HHS Staffing

According to [reports](#), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is hiring around 100 new employees to support preventive care initiatives through its Innovation Center, despite recently laying off nearly 300 workers agency-wide. Former employees affected by the reduction in force say they were told they cannot apply for the new positions, raising concerns about hiring transparency as CMS moves forward with its “Make America Healthy Again” agenda.

Dr. George Tidmarsh, a Stanford adjunct professor and former pharmaceutical executive, has been appointed as the new head of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), replacing acting director Dr. Jacqueline Corrigan-Curay. The Center is tasked with evaluating the safety and effectiveness of most medications seeking market entry in the U.S. According to the FDA [press release](#), Dr. Tidmarsh has led the successful clinical development of seven FDA-approved drugs and served as founder and CEO of multiple biopharmaceutical companies focused on oncology and critical care medicine.

Regulatory Update

The Office of Management and Budget completed reviewing an [interim final rule](#) titled, “Administrative Simplification: Modifications to NCPDP Retail Pharmacy Standards. OMB is also reviewing the following:

- **Medicare:**
 - **FY 2026 Medicare Payment.** Final FY 2026 payment updates to the [acute care hospitals and long-term care hospitals](#), [hospice facilities](#), [skilled nursing facilities](#), [inpatient rehabilitation facilities](#), and [inpatient psychiatric facilities](#). These final rules are typically published around August 1.
 - **CY 2026 Medicare Advantage/Part D Policy.** Final CY 2026 policy and technical changes to the [Medicare Advantage, Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit, and Medicare Cost Plan Programs, and PACE](#)
- **Medicaid:**
 - **Gender-Affirming Care.** A [proposed rule](#) titled, “Medicaid Program; Prohibition on Federal Medicaid Funding for Sex Trait Modification Procedures Furnished to Children and Youth.”
 - **Immigration Status.** A [final rule](#) titled, “Medicaid Eligibility Changes Under the Affordable Care Act of 2010; Giving States Freedom to Use Immigration Information to Determine State Residency for Medicaid Eligibility.” The final rule is part of the Trump administration’s efforts to [increase federal oversight](#) on states using Federal Medicaid funding for the health care of undocumented immigrants.
 - **State Directed Payments.** A [proposed rule](#) titled, “Medicaid Managed Care-State Directed Payments.” The proposed rule appears intended to advance a [presidential memorandum](#) released on June 6, which directs HHS to “eliminate waste, fraud, and

abuse in Medicaid, including by ensuring Medicaid payments rates are not higher than Medicare, to the extent permitted by applicable law.”

- **Prescription Drugs:**
 - **340B Program.** A [notice](#) from the Health Resources and Services Administration titled, “340 Rebate Guidance.”
- **Nutrition:**
 - **Head Start.** A [notice](#) from the Administration for Children and Families titled, “Publish Request for Information: Nutrition Services in Head Start Programs

This Week in Health Policy

Mon. (7/21)

- **12:30pm – BPC/CMWF Discussion: Digital Mental Health** – The Bipartisan Policy Center and the Commonwealth Fund hold a discussion to explore how digital mental health tools are used today, their promise and risks, and the key questions shaping federal policy. [Details.](#)

Tue. (7/22)

- **9:30am – Punchbowl Discussion: Children’s Online Safety** – Punchbowl News holds a discussion with Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA) on online safety for kids. [Details.](#)
- **10:15am – Hearing: Organ Procurement and Transplant System Oversight** – The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations holds a hearing on ensuring the nation’s organ procurement and transplant system prioritizes patient safety. [Details.](#)
- **10:15am – Hearing: Treasury and HHS Nominations** – The Senate Finance Committee holds a hearing to examine the nominations of Jonathan McKernan to be an Under Secretary of the Treasury, and Alex Adams to be Assistant Secretary for Family Support, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). [Details.](#)
- **10:15am – Hearing: EBSA Transparency** – The House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions holds a hearing titled “Restoring Trust: Enhancing Transparency and Oversight at the Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA).” [Details.](#)
- **2:00pm – Hearing: Medicare Advantage Lessons, Insights, and Opportunities** – The House Ways and Means Health and Oversight Subcommittees hold a joint hearing to examine lessons learned after more than two decades of the modern Medicare Advantage (MA) program, the challenges and opportunities associated with the rapid growth in MA enrollment, and targeted improvements that allow MA to continue facilitating quality outcomes for beneficiaries and value for taxpayers. [Details.](#)
- **2:30pm – Hearing: Criminal Aliens** – The Senate Judiciary Border Security and Immigration Subcommittee holds a hearing to examine criminal aliens in America. [Details.](#)

Wed. (7/23)

- **8:00am – Axios Discussion: OBBB Impact** – Axios holds a discussion with Sens. Tom Tillis (R-NC) and Elissa Slotkin (D-MI) on the impact of the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” as well as what's next for the remainder of the year and heading into the 2026 midterm elections. [Details.](#)
- **9:00am – AHP Discussion: Aging Policy** – The Alliance for Health Policy (AHP) holds its 2025 Signature Series Summit, with the theme "Aging in America" and featuring sessions on health care and housing policies. [Details.](#)
- **9:30am – FDA Meeting: Oral Unapproved Prescription Drug Products Safety** – The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) holds a meeting to seek public input on the clinical use and safety concerns associated with the use of orally ingestible unapproved prescription drug products containing fluoride in the pediatric population. [Details.](#)
- **2:00pm – Hearing: Unaccompanied Children** – The House Oversight Subcommittee on Federal Law Enforcement holds a hearing to begin a comprehensive oversight review of the findings from [a March 2025 report](#) by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of the Inspector General, which found that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is not always able to monitor the location and status of unaccompanied migrant children released from the custody of DHS and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Details.](#)
- **2:30pm – Hearing: Ending DEI Discrimination** – The Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution holds a hearing to examine ending illegal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) discrimination and preferences, focusing on enforcing civil rights laws. [Details.](#)

Thurs. (7/24)

- **9:30am – Markup: FY2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Bill** – The Senate Appropriations Committee holds a markup of the FY 2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. [Details.](#)
- **10:00am – Hearing: Expanding Employee Ownership** – The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee holds a hearing on empowering workers by strengthening Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs). [Details.](#)
- **2:00pm – FTC Meeting: Formulary and Benefit Practices Impacting Drug Competition** – The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) host listening sessions to discuss ways to make prescription drugs more affordable for Americans by promoting competition. The listening sessions will focus on improving the affordability of pharmaceuticals by increasing generic and biosimilar availability and promoting competition through drug formularies and benefits. This is the second session and will examine formulary and benefit practices and regulatory abuse impacting drug competition. [Details.](#)

Additional Multi-Day Events

- **July 23-July 24 – CMS Meeting: Clinical Diagnostic Laboratory Tests** – The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) holds a meeting of the Medicare Advisory Panel on Clinical Diagnostic Laboratory Tests to advise the HHS Secretary and the CMS Administrator on the

Calendar Year (CY) 2026 Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule (CLFS) new and reconsidered test codes. [Details.](#)

Featured Analysis

- **OBBA Medicaid Provisions and Timeline for Implementation** – In Policy Hub [here.](#)
- **Changes to ACA Premium Tax Credit Policy in 2026 and Beyond** - In Policy Hub [here.](#)
- **Supreme Court Decisions Reshape Medicaid, Gender-Affirming Care, and Judicial Power** – In Policy Hub [here.](#)
- **AI in Health and Governance Roundup: New Frameworks, Tools, and Oversight Challenges** – In Policy Hub [here.](#)
- **Litigation Update: Legal Cases in Response to Trump Administration Executive Actions** – In Policy Hub Insight Bank [here.](#)
- **100 Days of Disruption: Health Policy Under Trump 2.0** – In Policy Hub Insight Bank [here.](#)

Congressional Lookback

Thurs. (7/17)

- **The House E&C Health Subcommittee** [convened](#) a hearing to examine a series of bipartisan proposals aimed at strengthening the U.S. public health infrastructure. [Details.](#)
- **The Senate HELP Committee** held a [hearing](#) to discuss employment benefits for independent workers. [Details.](#)

Regulatory Lookback

Fri. (7/18)

- **CMS** hosted a [webinar office hour](#) to describe and answer questions about the new Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction (WISeR) Model. [Details.](#)

Thurs. (7/17)

- **CMS** issued [two new letters](#) to states outlining that the agency will shift away from initiatives that it defines as extended beyond existing statutory limits, including workforce initiatives and those of continuous eligibility. [Details.](#)
- **The DOJ** released [guidance](#) to implement President Trump's Executive Order No. 14224, which establishes English as the official language of the United States. [Details.](#)

Wed. (7/16)

- **The CRS** released an [in-depth analysis](#) of the Trump v. CASA, Inc. decision. [Details.](#)

Tues. (7/15)

- **CMS** released the CY 2026 OPPS [proposed rule](#). Comments are due September 15. [Details](#).
- **CMS** announced the participation of [thirty-three states](#) in the CMMI Cell and Gene Therapy Access Model. [Details](#).
- **CMS** hosted a webinar to introduce the Rapid Cycle Innovation Program. [Details](#).

Mon. (7/14)

- **CMS** released the CY 2026 Medicare PFS [proposed rule](#). Comments are due September 12. [Details](#).

Comment & Application Deadlines

- **July 14:** CMS released a [proposed rule](#) entitled “Medicaid Program; Preserving Medicaid Funding for Vulnerable Populations – Closing a Health Care-Related Tax Loophole Proposed. [Details](#).
- **July 15:** The NIH [issued](#) a Request for Information (RFI) to gather public input on the development of a comprehensive NIH Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy. [Details](#).
- **August 13:** HHS announced that the Trump Administration is rescinding a previous interpretation of the PRWORA in order to prevent access to federal public benefits for non-citizens. [Details](#)
- **August 29:** CMS issued the CY 2026 home health prospective payment and rate update [proposed rule](#). [Details](#).
- **August 29:** CMS issued the CY 2026 ESRD PPS [proposed rule](#). [Details](#).
- **September 11:** The FDA issued an [RFI](#) to begin its process of reviewing nutrition requirements in infant formulas. [Details](#).
- **September 12:** CMS released the CY 2026 Medicare PFS [proposed rule](#). [Details](#).
- **September 15:** CMS released the CY 2026 OPPS [proposed rule](#). Comments are due September 15. [Details](#).