



## Health Policy Briefing

April 7, 2025

### Senate Adopts Budget Blueprint

The Senate passed a budget resolution early Saturday morning, a critical step in the reconciliation process that Republicans hope to use to advance President Donald Trump’s legislative agenda. The measure was adopted in a 51-48 vote following a lengthy series of votes on amendments known as a vote-a-rama. Sens. Rand Paul (Ky.) and Susan Collins (Maine) were the only Republicans to vote against the resolution. For the reconciliation process to proceed, a unified budget resolution must first be adopted by the House of Representatives. The House approved its own budget resolution in February that called for \$880 billion in savings over the next decade to come from the Energy and Commerce Committee – likely necessitating deep cuts to the Medicaid program. The possibility of such cuts has received bipartisan pushback in the Senate. During the Senate vote-a-rama, the chamber adopted an amendment from Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) to strengthen and improve Medicaid for the most vulnerable populations and extend the life of the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund. The amendment was agreed to along party lines, with Democrats arguing that the failure to define “most vulnerable populations” continues to leave the door open for cuts to the Medicaid program. House Republican leadership told their members that they will proceed with a vote on the Senate budget blueprint this week, despite apparent opposition from some fiscal conservatives. The Senate plan contains lower spending cut targets and would allow for more tax cuts that are not fully paid for in comparison to the House’s original framework. Republicans can only lose three members on a party-line vote if all members of the chamber are present and voting.

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## Dr. Oz Confirmed as CMS Administrator

The Senate confirmed Mehmet Oz, MD as administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on Thursday in a 53-45 party line vote. As CMS administrator, Dr. Oz - a cardiothoracic surgeon - will be responsible for the agency in charge of the insurance coverage of more than 160 million people. During his Senate confirmation process, Oz stated that his focus as administrator will be on empowering beneficiaries with better tools and more transparency to manage their health and navigate the health care system; incentivizing health care providers to optimize care with real time information; and modernizing tools to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse.

## Senate Panel Advances Six Bills to Lower Prescription Drug Prices

The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced six bipartisan pieces of legislation on Thursday that aim to reduce prescription drug costs and increase access to generic medications. Each of the bills - which were previously approved by the committee during the 118th Congress- was advanced by voice vote. The ***Prescription Pricing for the People Act*** (S. 527) requires the Federal Trade Commission to examine the effects of consolidation in the pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) industry, as well as other potentially abusive behavior by PBMs, on pricing. The ***Drug Competition Enhancement Act*** (S. 1040) would prohibit branded drug manufacturers from deliberately preventing potential competitors from entering the marketplace using product hopping. The ***Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act*** (S. 1041) would prevent bad actors in the pharmaceutical industry from using "patent thickets" to stop potential competitors from entering the marketplace. The ***Interagency Patent Coordination and Improvement Act*** (S. 1097) would establish a task force between the United States Patent and Trademark Office and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to improve communication and coordination in implementing each agency's activities related to pharmaceutical patents. The ***Stop STALLING Act*** (S. 1095) would deter branded pharmaceutical companies from filing sham "citizen petitions" with the FDA to interfere with the approval of generic and biosimilar medicines. Finally, the ***Preserve Access to Affordable Generics and Biosimilars Act*** (S. 1096) would limit "pay-for-delay" deals that prevent or delay the introduction of generic drugs. The ***Affordable Prescriptions for Patients Act*** was the only bill of the six to pass the full Senate last Congress.

## HELP Requests RFK Testimony on HHS Restructuring

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Bill Cassidy, MD (R-La.) and Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) have [called](#) on U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to testify before the panel on Thursday. The lawmakers wish to discuss the department's proposed reorganization and recent reductions in force. It remains unclear whether the Secretary will accept the panel's invitation to testify. "The news coverage on the HHS reorg is being set by anonymous sources and opponents are setting the perceptions," Sen. Cassidy said in a statement. "This will be a good opportunity for him to set the record straight and speak to the goals, structure and benefits of the proposed reorganization." During his confirmation process, Kennedy committed to coming before the HELP Committee on a quarterly basis upon request from the chair.

## E&C Democrats Press for Answers on HHS Job Cuts

Democrats on the House Energy and Commerce Committee have sent a [letter](#) to HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. on his decision to eliminate 25% of the department's workforce. The lawmakers ask for a response to the following requests by April 15:

- Provide a detailed list of the roles being eliminated across HHS;
- Describe in detail the process by which it was determined what roles would be eliminated;
- Specify what is meant by the elimination of 3,500 roles at the Food and Drug Administration not affecting reviewers or impacting reviewers;
- Specify which five regional offices will be closed and the process for determining why regional offices should be closed and which ones should be closed; and
- Specify which operating divisions will be eliminated or consolidated, and which new or existing operating division(s) will be responsible for carrying out the eliminated or consolidated operation division's work.

The letter was signed by Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-N.J.), Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Diana DeGette (D-Colo.), and Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Ranking Member Yvette D. Clarke (D-N.Y.). Staff from HHS are scheduled to brief the House Energy and Commerce Committee on the HHS restructuring this week.

## Senate Democrats Urge HHS to Address MA Spending

A group of Senate Democrats led by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) have sent a [letter](#) to the Trump administration highlighting the need to reign in waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicare Advantage (MA) program. The letter points out that the MA program has continuously cost more than traditional Medicare without improving health outcomes, arguing that MA program spending endangers the solvency of the Medicare trust funds. The lawmakers urge the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to:

1. Eliminate waste and abuse from overpayments by improving risk adjustment calculations in the proposed 2026 MA Rate Notice and strictly enforcing the overpayment regulations for MA Organizations outlined in the 2025 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule rule.
2. Strengthen enforcement against MA insurers that illegally deny care.
3. Address additional barriers to care.
4. Enact reforms to reduce disparities in care.

## Booker Sets Record for Longest Speech on Senate Floor

Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) held the Senate floor for 25 hours and five consecutive minutes last week in protest of the Trump administration and congressional Republicans. The speech broke the previous Senate floor speech record set by the late South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond in 1957, lasting 24 hours and 18 minutes. Booker yielded to Democratic senators throughout the day for questions to give himself short breaks from speaking. During the speech, he argued for the need to defend against actions from the administration that would cut Medicaid, defund medical research, and increase health care costs for Americans.

## Court Issues Permanent Injunction in NIH Indirect Cost Cuts Litigation

On April 4, 2025, the federal government [requested](#) that the court convert its March 5 preliminary injunction (barring the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) indirect cost cuts) into a permanent injunction. In their motion for conversion, the NIH noted that it hoped to expedite its ability to appeal to the First Circuit Court of Appeals on the case's merits once a final judgment was entered. The court agreed and [issued](#) a permanent injunction the same day. The ruling vacates the NIH's February 2025 guidance ([Notice Number NOT-OD-25-068](#)), which sought to cap indirect cost reimbursement at 15%, and permanently bars the agency from implementing the cap nationwide unless the federal government is able to successfully appeal. Judge Angel Kelley of the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts concluded that the plaintiffs—22 state attorneys general and several major research institutions—had demonstrated actual success on the merits of their claims. Reiterating the points in the preliminary injunction, the court held that the NIH's policy violated federal law, was arbitrary and capricious, improperly retroactive, and was issued without required notice-and-comment procedures.

## FTC's PBM Lawsuit to Continue

The Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) case against the nation's largest pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) will continue to move forward with the involvement of FTC Chairman Andrew Ferguson. The status of the lawsuit against CVS Health Corp., Cigna Group, and UnitedHealth Group Inc., alleging that the PBMs used illegal rebate programs to keep less expensive insulin products off of drug formularies, was called into question following the Trump administration's dismissal of the two Democratic commissioners overseeing the case last month. Ferguson, who had previously recused himself from the case, changed his decision last week to ensure that the lawsuit can continue.

## Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

House Appropriations Committee hearing "Assessing the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief;" 8:00 a.m.; April 8

House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health hearing "Lowering Costs for Patients: The Health of the Biosimilar Market;" 10:00 a.m.; April 8

House Energy and Commerce Committee markup to consider H.R. 2483, *SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act of 2025*; H.R. 1520, *Charlotte Woodward Organ Transplant Discrimination Prevention Act*; H.R. 2319, *Women and Lung Cancer Research and Preventive Services Act of 2025*; H.R. 1669, To amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the Stop, Observe, Ask, and Respond (SOAR) to Health and Wellness Training Program; H.R. 1082, *Shandra Eisenga Human Cell and Tissue Product Safety Act*; and H.R. 2484, *Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act*; 10:00 a.m.; April 8

Senate Judiciary Committee hearing "The Freedom of Information Act: Perspectives from Public Requesters;" 10:15 a.m.; April 8

House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Information Technologies, and Innovation hearing "Final Report on the National Security Commission for Emerging Biotechnology;" 4:00 p.m.; April 8

Senate HELP Committee executive session to consider S. 932, *Give Kids a Chance Act of 2025*; 10:00 a.m.; April 9

House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing "Restoring Trust in FDA: Rooting Out Illicit Products;" 10:00 a.m.; April 9

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education public witness day; 10:30 a.m.; April 9

POSSIBLE: Senate HELP Committee hearing "An Update on the Restructuring of the Department of Health and Human Services" with HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.; 10:00 a.m.; April 10

H.Res.276 — Raising awareness of the racial disparities in the impact of colorectal cancer on the Hispanic community; Sponsor: Hernández, Pablo [Resident Commissioner-D-PR-At Large]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Res.277 — Supporting the designation of May 2025 as “National Myositis Awareness Month”; Sponsor: McCormick, Richard [Rep.-R-GA-7]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2483 — Sponsor: Guthrie, Brett [Rep.-R-KY-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Education and Workforce; Judiciary; Financial Services

H.R.2484 — Sponsor: Harshbarger, Diana [Rep.-R-TN-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2487 — To improve access to evidence-based, lifesaving health care for transgender people, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Balint, Becca [Rep.-D-VT-At Large]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2491 — To require the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Commissioner of Social Security to review and simplify the processes, procedures, forms, and communications for family caregivers to assist individuals in establishing eligibility for, enrolling in, and maintaining and utilizing coverage and benefits under the Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and Social Security programs respectively, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Cammack, Kat [Rep.-R-FL-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2493 — To reauthorize certain programs regarding rural health care; Sponsor: Carter, Earl L. “Buddy” [Rep.-R-GA-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2495 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide coverage of medical nutrition therapy services for individuals with eating disorders under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Chu, Judy [Rep.-D-CA-28]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2497 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a public health education, awareness, and outreach campaign to enhance access to abortion and related health services; Sponsor: Crockett, Jasmine [Rep.-D-TX-30]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2509 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide incentives for behavioral health integration; Sponsor: Malliotakis, Nicole [Rep.-R-NY-11]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2527 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to improve children’s vision and eye health through grants to States, territories, and Tribal organizations, and the provision of technical assistance to support those efforts; Sponsor: Veasey, Marc A. [Rep.-D-TX-33]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2528 — To amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to clarify the treatment of certain association health plans as employers, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Walberg, Tim [Rep.-R-MI-5]; Committees: House - Education and Workforce

H.R.2529 — To amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to require group health plans and health insurance issuers offering group or individual health insurance coverage to permit enrollees to obtain a 365-day supply of contraceptives; Sponsor: Underwood, Lauren [Rep.-D-IL-14]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Education and Workforce

H.R.2531 — To direct the Secretary of Labor to issue an occupational safety and health standard that requires covered employers within the health care and social service industries to develop and implement a comprehensive workplace violence prevention plan, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Courtney, Joe [Rep.-D-CT-2]; Committees: House - Education

and Workforce; Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2532 — To prohibit certain removals of employees of the Department of Health and Human Services and sub-agencies and operating divisions thereof, and for other purposes; Sponsor: McClellan, Jennifer L. [Rep.-D-VA-4]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Education and Workforce; Ways and Means; Natural Resources

H.R.2533 — To amend title XI of the Social Security Act to require the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to test a model to improve access to specialty health services for certain Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries; Sponsor: Arrington, Jodey C. [Rep.-R-TX-19]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2538 — To amend title XI of the Social Security Act to require the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to test a comprehensive alternative response for emergencies model under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Carey, Mike [Rep.-R-OH-15]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2541 — To require the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to revise its regulations to protect patients from unintended exposure to radiation during nuclear medicine procedures, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Davis, Donald G. [Rep.-D-NC-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2542 — To amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to provide that priority research drugs shall not be treated as line extensions of existing drugs for purposes of calculating manufacturer rebates under the Medicare and Medicaid programs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Davis, Donald G. [Rep.-D-NC-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2553 — To limit cost-sharing for prescription drugs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Horsford, Steven [Rep.-D-NV-4]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Education and Workforce; Ways and Means

H.R.2554 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to apply prescription drug inflation rebates to drugs furnished in the commercial market and to change the base year for rebate calculations; Sponsor: Horsford, Steven [Rep.-D-NV-4]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2557 — To amend title 10, United States Code, to provide fertility treatment under the TRICARE Program; Sponsor: Jacobs, Sara [Rep.-D-CA-51]; Committees: House - Armed Services

H.R.2560 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize lifespan respite care programs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Langworthy, Nicholas A. [Rep.-R-NY-23]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2571 — To amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to exclude from the definition of health insurance coverage certain medical stop-loss insurance obtained by certain plan sponsors of group health plans, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Onder, Robert [Rep.-R-MO-3]; Committees: House - Education and Workforce

H.R.2576 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand health care and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs for military sexual trauma, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Pingree, Chellie [Rep.-D-ME-1]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.2586 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to allow States to make medical assistance available to inmates during the 30-day period preceding their release; Sponsor: Tonko, Paul [Rep.-D-NY-20]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2587 — To establish a Youth Mental Health Research Initiative in the National Institutes of Health for purposes of encouraging collaborative research to improve youth mental health; Sponsor: Watson Coleman, Bonnie [Rep.-D-NJ-12]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

S.1248 — A bill to amend title XI of the Social Security Act to require the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to test a model to improve access to specialty health services for certain Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries; Sponsor: Mullin, Markwayne [Sen.-R-OK]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.1256 — A bill to authorize the Pines Foundation to establish the Fire Island AIDS Memorial, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Gillibrand, Kirsten E. [Sen.-D-NY]; Committees: Senate - Energy and Natural Resources

S.1258 — A bill to prohibit the sale of food that is, or contains, unsafe poppy seeds; Sponsor: Cotton, Tom [Sen.-R-AR]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.1261 — A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to expand access to telehealth services, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Schatz, Brian [Sen.-D-HI]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.1264 — A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish a demonstration program to promote collaborative treatment of mental and physical health comorbidities under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Bennet, Michael F. [Sen.-D-CO]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.1266 — A bill to establish a Youth Mental Health Research Initiative in the National Institutes of Health for purposes of encouraging collaborative research to improve youth mental health; Sponsor: Klobuchar, Amy [Sen.-D-MN]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.1269 — A bill to promote United States leadership in technical standards by directing the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the Department of State to take certain actions to encourage and enable United States participation in developing standards and specifications for artificial intelligence and other critical and emerging technologies, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Blackburn, Marsha [Sen.-R-TN]; Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

S.1290 — A bill to expand the functions of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to include workforce frameworks for critical and emerging technologies, to require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to develop an artificial intelligence workforce framework, and periodically review and update the NICE Workforce Framework for Cybersecurity, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Peters, Gary C. [Sen.-D-MI]; Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

S.1302 — A bill to provide for increased transparency in generic drug applications; Sponsor: Hassan, Margaret Wood [Sen.-D-NH]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

H.R.2589 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to ensure the consensual donation and respectful disposition of human bodies and human body parts donated or transferred for education, research, or the advancement of medical, dental, or mortuary science and not for use in human transplantation, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Bilirakis, Gus M. [Rep.-R-FL-12]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2590 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish a demonstration program to promote collaborative treatment of mental and physical health comorbidities under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Boyle, Brendan F. [Rep.-D-PA-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R. 2610— To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to address significant under projection of MA local area growth due to wage index reclassification; Sponsor: Tenney, Claudia [Rep.-R-NY-24]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.2615 — To prohibit the sale of food that is, or contains, unsafe poppy seeds; Sponsor: Womack, Steve [Rep.-R-AR-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.2623 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to designate medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs as innovative therapies centers of excellence, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Correa, J. Luis [Rep.-D-CA-46]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.2630 — To amend the Advancing Research to Prevent Suicide Act to expand the areas of focus regarding childhood suicide, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Gillen, Laura [Rep.-D-NY-4]; Committees: House - Science, Space, and Technology

H.R.2636 — To provide for appropriate cost-sharing for individuals 26 years of age or younger for insulin products covered under private health plans; Sponsor: Landsman, Greg [Rep.-D-OH-1]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Education and Workforce

H.R.2639 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to make permanent certain telehealth flexibilities under the Medicare program for telehealth services furnished by Indian health programs; Sponsor: Leger Fernandez, Teresa [Rep.-D-NM-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.2640 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that certain health care contractors of the Department of Veterans Affairs are subject to Federal tort claims laws, to improve the accountability of physicians of the Department, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Luttrell, Morgan [Rep.-R-TX-8]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs