



Health Policy Briefing

March 9, 2026

Lawmakers Comment on ‘Professional Degree’ Proposed Rule

A bipartisan group of 150 members of Congress have raised concerns about the impact of new borrowing caps for graduate and professional degree students on the nursing workforce. The lawmakers submitted a [public comment](#) on the Department of Education’s proposed rule to implement the student financial aid provisions included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed last year. The letter expresses disappointment over the Department’s decision to omit post-baccalaureate nursing degrees from the regulatory definition of “professional degree,” and warn that the proposed rule will make it more difficult for nurses to join the health care workforce. “At a time when our nation is facing a health care shortage, especially in primary care, now is not the time to cut off the student pipeline to these programs,” the lawmakers argue. “Nurses and nurse faculty make up the backbone of our health system, and post-baccalaureate nursing degrees lead to demonstrated outcomes...As such, post-baccalaureate nursing degrees should be treated equally to other accredited post-baccalaureate health profession degrees.”

Lawmakers Ask HHS Secretary to Address NIH Advisory Council Vacancies

A bipartisan group of lawmakers have sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. urging him to fill outstanding vacancies on advisory councils of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). While each of NIH’s divisions has an advisory council to assess scientific grant applications, only one council vacancy has been filled since the start of President Donald Trump’s second term. A STAT analysis found that the majority of NIH advisory councils are operating at less than half capacity, while several institutes, including the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, the National Human Genome Research Institute, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and the National Institute on Aging are at risk of losing all their advisory council members at the end of 2026 when their terms expire. The letter, led by Reps. Suzan DelBene (D-Wash.), Andre Carson (D-Ind.), and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), was signed by more than two dozen other members of Congress.

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Oversight Committee Continues MN Fraud Investigation

House Oversight Committee Chair James Comer (R-Ky.) released an [interim staff report](#) last week regarding fraud in the state of Minnesota's social services programs. The report asserts that \$9 billion in Medicaid funds were lost or put at risk since 2018. "The Committee's findings raise serious questions about governance and oversight in Minnesota's administration of federal funds," the report states, asserting "the failure to act decisively in the face of known fraud allowed criminal schemes to flourish and diverted resources away from eligible recipients: the vulnerable populations these programs were intended to serve." Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and Attorney General Keith Ellison appeared before the committee during a [hearing](#) last week.

Republican Leaders of Energy and Commerce Committee Expand Medicaid Fraud Investigation

House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee Chair Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.), E&C Health Subcommittee Chair Morgan Griffith (R-Va.), and E&C Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Chair John Joyce, MD (R-Penn.) have expanded their investigation into alleged fraud within the Medicaid program. The Republican lawmakers sent [letters](#) to the governors and leaders of state health agencies in ten states on Tuesday, including New York, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maine, Nebraska, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Washington. The Committee asked the states to respond to their inquiries by March 17.

Grassley, Wyden Inquire about OPTN Spending

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) have sent a letter regarding the \$20 million spent by the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) on meetings in 2024. The lawmakers also cite allegations from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) that the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) had deleted or modified records, and ask the agency how this information was uncovered. UNOS [responded](#) to the allegations and asserted that no files or data required by its contract with HRSA to serve the OPTN are missing.

Latest Congressional Resignations/Retirements

Several lawmakers have announced their decision to not seek reelection in November. The list includes Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-Mont.), the former Navy SEAL who served as Interior Secretary during President Donald Trump's first term in office. Rep. Zinke currently serves on the House Appropriations Committee. Montana Sen. Steven Daines (R) also plans to retire. Sen. Daines, who was first elected to the Senate in 2014, is a member of the Senate Finance Committee. Rep. Burgess Owens (R-Utah) and Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) also plan to retire at the end of their terms. Owens is a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, while Issa sits on the Judiciary and Science, Space, and Technology committees. Texas Republican Dan Crenshaw was defeated in a primary challenge for the state's 2nd congressional district on Tuesday. Rep. Crenshaw is a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. The President has also tapped Sen. Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla.) to replace Kristi Noem as Department of Homeland Security secretary at the end of the month. Mullin currently sits on both the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and the Appropriations' Labor-Health and Human Services and Agriculture-Food and Drug Administration subcommittees. The [number](#) of members leaving their seats this cycle is approaching record highs, with nearly 60 members of the House of Representatives and 10 senators planning to retire.

Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing “Foreign Dependence: How China Captured America’s Drug Supply;” 3:30 p.m.; March 11

Recently Introduced Health Legislation

S.3957 — A bill to support National Science Foundation education and professional development relating to artificial intelligence; Sponsor: Moran, Jerry [Sen.-R-KS]; Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

H.R.7745 — To establish certain requirements relating to wellness checks for the health and welfare of certain members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Arrington, Jodey C. [Rep.-R-TX-19]; Committees: House - Armed Services

H.R.7747 — To amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to streamline the certification process for State Veterans Homes by allowing certain facilities certified by the Department of Veterans Affairs to be deemed in compliance with specified Medicare and Medicaid requirements, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Bergman, Jack [Rep.-R-MI-1]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce; Veterans’ Affairs

S.3963 — A bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide overtime compensation exceptions to employers of emergency medical technicians and paramedics in rural areas; Sponsor: Curtis, John R. [Sen.-R-UT]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

H.Res.1098 — Expressing support for the designation of March 3, 2026, as “National Triple-Negative Breast Cancer Day”; Sponsor: Morelle, Joseph D. [Rep.-D-NY-25]; Committees: House - Oversight and Government Reform

H.R.7777 — To amend the Defense Production Act of 1950 to ensure the supply of certain medical materials essential to national defense, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Salazar, Maria Elvira [Rep.-R-FL-27]; Committees: House - Financial Services

H.R.7778 — To amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to increase under the Medicaid program the minimum monthly personal needs allowance for institutionalized individuals and couples; Sponsor: Subramanyam, Suhas [Rep.-D-VA-10]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.7779 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish a program for the conduct and support of research, training, and health information dissemination with respect to environmental risk factors of neurodegenerative diseases, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Subramanyam, Suhas [Rep.-D-VA-10]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

S.3988 — A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to offer annual preventative health evaluations to veterans with a spinal cord injury or disorder and increase access to assistive technologies, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Moran, Jerry [Sen.-R-KS]; Committees: Senate - Veterans’ Affairs

S.3989 — A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide community-based training opportunities for medical students in rural areas and medically underserved communities, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Curtis, John R. [Sen.-R-UT]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.3990 – A bill to increase access to pre-exposure prophylaxis to reduce the transmission of HIV; Sponsor: Smith, Tina [Sen.-D-MN]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.3992 — A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to codify authority for the Joint Medical Facility Fund of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Banks, Jim [Sen.-R-IN];

Committees: Senate - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.7787 — To amend title VII of the Public Health Service Act to strengthen the mental health workforce, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Carter, Troy A. [Rep.-D-LA-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.7790 — To amend the HITECH Act to allow an individual to obtain a copy of such individual's protected health information at no cost unless certain circumstances apply, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Foster, Bill [Rep.-D-IL-11]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.7799 — To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that 501(c)(3) organizations are liable for the use of funding provided as a fiscal sponsor; Sponsor: Moran, Nathaniel [Rep.-R-TX-1]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

H.R.7803 — To rename the program under part C of title XVIII of the Social Security Act, and for other purposes.; Sponsor: Pocan, Mark [Rep.-D-WI-2]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

S.3999 — A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that women veterans may schedule appointments for women's specialty care under the laws administered by the Secretary without requiring a referral, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Blackburn, Marsha [Sen.-R-TN]; Committees: Senate - Veterans' Affairs

S.4008 — A bill to reauthorize programs relating to oral health promotion and disease prevention; Sponsor: Durbin, Richard J. [Sen.-D-IL]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.4009 — A bill to provide for the imposition of sanctions with respect to forced organ harvesting within the People's Republic of China, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Cruz, Ted [Sen.-R-TX]; Committees: Senate - Foreign Relations

H.Res.1109 — Supporting the goals and ideals of National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day; Sponsor: Waters, Maxine [Rep.-D-CA-43]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Foreign Affairs

H.R.7817 — To amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to ensure that taxpayer funds for health insurance coverage are available only to authorized individuals, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Boebert, Lauren [Rep.-R-CO-4]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.7830 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to require hospitals to develop discharge plans for pregnant individuals as a condition of participation under Medicare, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Kelly, Robin L. [Rep.-D-IL-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.7837 — To amend title XI of the Social Security Act to require the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to test a model implementing most-favored-nation drug pricing; Sponsor: Meuser, Daniel [Rep.-R-PA-9]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.7841 — To amend title 38, United States Code, to include infertility as a condition presumed to be incurred or aggravated by toxic exposure in the course of active military, naval, air, or space service; Sponsor: Morrison, Kelly [Rep.-D-MN-3]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.7853 — To increase access to pre-exposure prophylaxis to reduce the transmission of HIV; Sponsor: Takano, Mark [Rep.-D-CA-39]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Oversight and Government Reform; Ways and Means; Veterans' Affairs; Armed Services; Natural Resources; Financial Services; Education and Workforce

H.R.7854 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to establish a National Institute for Biomedical Research and Development, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Tlaib, Rashida [Rep.-D-MI-12]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Judiciary