



## Health Policy Briefing

April 13, 2026

### Lawmakers Return from Recess, Health Hearings on the Calendar for This Week

Lawmakers are returning from spring recess this week and are expected to focus on funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and a path for the next budget reconciliation bill. President Donald Trump and Senate Republicans have reached an agreement on the outline of a fast-track spending bill that would focus on Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection. It remains unclear if Republicans in the House of Representatives will also coalesce around this approach. The President has called for such reconciliation legislation to be signed into law by June 1. DHS has been operating under a partial government shutdown since February 14, the longest partial shutdown in U.S. government history.

Congressional health committees have a busy schedule of hearings planned for this week, including:

- A House Ways and Means Committee [field hearing](#) to examine how a modernized approach to health care can better prioritize wellness as part of chronic disease prevention and incentivize innovations in care delivery that improve patient outcomes.
- A House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health [hearing](#) on legislation addressing various areas of public health, including disease research and prevention efforts, bolstering resources for rural medical services and health care providers, promoting healthy activities, and increasing access to care.
- A Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee [hearing](#) on prescription drug affordability; Chair Bill Cassidy, MD, has said that the proceedings will focus on how to increase competition among generic and biosimilar manufacturers.

Congressional hearings on fiscal year 2027 budgets have also begun. The House Ways and Means Committee will hear testimony from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Thursday morning; Secretary Kennedy will then appear before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-Health and

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Human Services (LHHS) Thursday afternoon. Stakeholders are invited to [submit written testimony](#) on the FY 2027 LHHS appropriations no later than Thursday, April 16. The LHHS Subcommittee has tentatively scheduled its appropriations bill markup for June 5.

## Secretary Kennedy Signs Updated ACIP Charter

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has signed an [updated charter document](#) for the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). The charter, which guides the mission and makeup of ACIP, is renewed every two years. The 2026 amendments broaden the range of expertise for individuals qualified to serve on the committee to include issues such as toxicology, biostatistics, immunology, family medicine, nursing, pediatric neurodevelopment, and recovery from serious vaccine injury. ACIP's previous charter required its members to "have expertise in the use of vaccines and other immunobiologic agents in clinical practice or preventive medicine, have expertise with clinical or laboratory vaccine research, or have expertise in assessment of vaccine efficacy and safety." This change may allow the Secretary to circumvent a recent federal court decision blocking the ACIP appointments made between June and January 2025. The new ACIP charter also includes language specifying that the committee should advise the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about the gaps in vaccine safety research and adverse effects following vaccination. Several new organizations are made eligible to participate as liaisons to ACIP under the new charter, including the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, the Independent Medical Alliance, the Medical Academy of Pediatrics & Special Needs, and Physicians for Informed Consent.

## Husted to Replace Mullins on LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee

Sen. Jon Husted (R-Ohio) is replacing Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla.) as a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-Health and Human Services (LHHS). Husted also serves on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Mullin was recently confirmed as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

## CMS Finalizes 2027 MA Payment Hike

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has finalized a 2.48% net increase to Medicare Advantage (MA) payments for 2027. This increase amounts to a \$13 billion payment boost for MA plans for the coming year. The final rate notice is a significant increase compared to the 0.09% originally proposed in January. The advance notice received a record breaking 40,000 comments from stakeholders. Upon finalization of the MA payment rate, Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) issued a statement expressing disappointment in CMS' decision. "While insurance companies get billions in higher payments and their stock prices soar, American families are stuck with record high premiums and deductibles, all to pay for care that's locked behind more and more barriers," Sen. Wyden said.

## MGMA Releases Latest Report on Regulatory Burdens

The Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) has released its [2026 Regulatory Burden Report](#). MGMA's survey of more than 230 physician groups found that 95% of providers faced higher regulatory or administrative burdens over the past three years, with 77% attributing those burdens as a cause of physician burnout. The report ties three of the top five burdens – prior authorization, claims denials, and downcoding – to the Medical Advantage (MA) program specifically. Ninety percent of practices surveyed have seen a patient shift to MA, with 79% percent characterizing this shift as having a negative impact on their practice. The report also highlights Medicare reporting requirements as a burden on physicians, with 86% of respondents saying that physicians are heavily impacted by the Merit-based Incentive Payment System's quality reporting requirements.

## CMS Launches Hemp, CBD Pilot

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced last week that participants in certain Innovation Center models may begin offering a new Substance Access Beneficiary Engagement Incentive (BEI) starting April 1, 2026. Through this optional incentive, eligible hemp-derived products can be incorporated into patient care plans under clinician guidance. The Substance Access BEI will be available to participants in the ACO REACH Model and the Enhancing Oncology Model, and will be available to participants in the Long-Term Enhanced ACO Design Model beginning in 2027. Under the Substance Access BEI, participating organizations that elect and receive CMS approval may furnish eligible hemp-derived products for up to \$500 per year per eligible beneficiary, subject to model requirements, safeguards, and clinical determination.

## Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health field hearing “Modernized Health Care in Practice: Empowering Americans to Live Healthier Lives;” 9:00 a.m.; April 14

Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee executive session to consider several bills including S.1885, Stop the Scroll Act; S.3257, Mental Health in Aviation Act of 2025; and S.3618, No Fentanyl on Social Media Act; 10:00 a.m.; April 14

House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Government Operations hearing “Fraud Prevention: Understanding Fraud in Federally Funded Programs Run by the States;” 10:00 a.m.; April 15

House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health legislative hearing “Healthier America: Legislative Proposals to Improve Public Health;” 10:15 a.m.; April 15

House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Workforce Protections hearing “Building an AI-Ready America: Understanding AI’s Economic Impact on Workers and Employers;” 10:15 a.m.; April 15

House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations markup including H.R.8057, to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the rate of pay for care or services provided under the Community Care Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on the location at which such care or services were provided; and H.R.8052, Veterans Infection Prevention Act; 2:15 p.m.; April 15

House Ways and Means Committee hearing with Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.; 9:00 a.m.; April 16

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing “Making Medicines More Affordable: How Competition Can Lower Drug Prices;” 10:00 a.m.; April 16

House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Health markup of H.R. 2283, Recognizing Community Organizations for Veteran Engagement and Recovery Act; H.R.5999, To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish an opioid antagonist to a veteran without requiring a prescription or copayment; H.R.6001, Veterans with ALS Reporting Act; H.R.6444, Blast Overpressure Research and Mitigation Task Force Act; H.R.6652, U.S. Vets of the FAS Act; H.R.6848, Whole Health for Veterans Act; H.R. 6993, BEACON Act; 10:15 a.m.; April 16

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies budget hearing for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2:00 p.m.; April 16

House Education and Workforce Committee hearing “Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Department of Health and Human Services;” 9:00 a.m.; April 17

H.R.8199 — To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a comprehensive standard for timing between referrals and appointments for care from the Department of Veterans Affairs and to submit a report with respect to that standard, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Franklin, Scott [Rep.-R-FL-18]; Committees: House - Veterans' Affairs

H.R.8201 — To amend Public Health Service Act to require community health centers to provide behavioral and mental health and substance use disorder services, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Lee, Susie [Rep.-D-NV-3]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.8203 — To amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to provide to States and local areas information on the best practices for addressing the effects that substance use disorder has on the workforce, and to provide local areas with grants to provide training activities related to the treatment and prevention of substance use disorder; Sponsor: Mackenzie, Ryan [Rep.-R-PA-7]; Committees: House - Education and Workforce

H.R.8205 — To amend the Accelerating Access to Critical Therapies for ALS Act to reauthorize the provisions of such Act through fiscal year 2031, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Quigley, Mike [Rep.-D-IL-5]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.8209 — To amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the school-based health centers grant program; Sponsor: Tonko, Paul [Rep.-D-NY-20]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Res.1158 — Recognizing the importance of sleep health and expressing support for the designation of the week of March 9 through March 13, 2026, as "Sleep Awareness Week"; Sponsor: Dean, Madeleine [Rep.-D-PA-4]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.Res.1163 — Supporting the recognition of a "Day of Remembrance and Commitment to Maternal Health Equity", honoring the life of Kira Johnson, and commending 4Kira4Moms for its unwavering dedication to improving maternal health in Atlanta, throughout Georgia, and across the United States, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Williams, Nikema [Rep.-D-GA-5]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.8216 — To direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study relating to 1-800-MEDICARE; Sponsor: De La Cruz, Monica [Rep.-R-TX-15]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.8234 — To amend Public Law 119-21 to repeal the budget neutrality requirement for certain Medicaid demonstration projects; Sponsor: Petterson, Brittany [Rep.-D-CO-7]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.8242 — To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the health coverage tax credit; Sponsor: Turner, Michael R. [Rep.-R-OH-10]; Committees: House - Ways and Means