



Health Policy Briefing

August 3, 2026

HELP Advances Health Nominees, Health Data Privacy Bill

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee advanced the nominations of Erica Schwartz, MD, JD, MPH to be Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Sean Kaufman to be Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response on Thursday. Schwartz was approved in a 13-10 vote, with Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) joining panel Republicans in support of her nomination. Kaufman was advanced in a party line 12-11 vote. Kaufman, who has faced criticism for his past positions on the safety of the Covid-19 and hepatitis B vaccines, secured the support of Chair Bill Cassidy, MD by disavowing his prior remarks and providing reassurances that he would not play a role in setting vaccine policy.

The HELP Committee also marked up the Health Information Privacy Reform Act (S. 3097) on Thursday, advancing the data privacy bill with unanimous support. The legislation would expand health privacy protections to account for new technologies such as smartwatches and health apps. It would require such technologies not currently governed by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act to disclose how consumer information is collected and shared, and create requirements around patient notification in cases of a data leak or security breach.

Inside

Administration to Release GAVI Funding.....	2
Senate Leadership Debates Blocking Grantmaking Proposed Rule.....	2
CBO Responds to GOP Concerns Re: Part D Expenditures.....	2
Wyden Releases Next in Series of Healthcare Policy RFIs.....	2
Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups.....	3
Recently Introduced Health Legislation.....	3

Administration to Release GAVI Funding

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) announced last week that the Trump administration has agreed to release \$600 million in congressionally appropriated funding for GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance. GAVI is a global health partnership whose mission is to increase access to vaccines in developing countries. Sen. Collins recently lead outreach by a group of senators urging the Department of State to release the money – representing approximately 15% of GAVI’s funding - before the money expires at the end of the fiscal year. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has criticized GAVI for using immunizations with ingredients like thimerosal. While GAVI has asserted that thimerosal is safe and necessary in countries that lack the refrigeration resources necessary to prevent bacterial contamination of the vaccines, the organization has also offered a timeline for phasing out shots that contain the preservative and expanding access to newer alternatives.

Senate Leadership Debates Blocking Grantmaking Proposed Rule

As they work to finalize a bipartisan continuing resolution to fund the federal government beyond the end of fiscal year 2026, Senate leadership is considering whether to include a provision to block the Trump administration’s Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance grantmaking proposed rule. Senators on both sides of the aisle have called for the regulation to be rescinded, and Appropriations Committee Chair Susan Collins (R-Maine) told reporters last week that she hopes the Senate will “take advantage of this opportunity to delay it.” The chamber is expected to take up the short-term government funding measure this week and is looking to extend funding through December 11, 2026 (one week beyond the House-passed CR).

CBO Responds to GOP Concerns Re: Part D Expenditures

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has [responded](#) to a letter from House Energy and Commerce, Budget, and Ways and Means committee leadership regarding its projection of Medicare Part D expenditures. The initial congressional letter specifically concerned technical changes in CBO’s Budget and Economic Outlook: 2026 to 2036 resulting in Medicare Part D spending being \$600 billion higher than projected the year prior. In its response, CBO stated that the evidence indicates that the spending reductions attributable to drug price negotiation and inflation rebates have been smaller than CBO originally estimated, explaining “the costs of the Part D redesign have been significantly larger because of greater-than-anticipated increases in spending because of greater use of prescription drugs.”

Wyden Releases Next in Series of Healthcare Policy RFIs

Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) has released a [request for information](#) on reforms to improve access, quality, and affordability of healthcare coverage. The RFI is organized by three general focus areas: (1) reversing Republican cuts and reimagining a better path, (2) making healthcare simpler for families, and (3) taking on corporate greed. Sen. Wyden, alongside 16 Democratic colleagues, is seeking feedback on a range of policy proposals, including lowering premiums and deductibles, expanding coverage options with Medicare-like choices for all, simplifying enrollment, ending insurance company practices that delay and deny care, and eliminating business tactics used by health care corporations to increase costs. Similar to other healthcare related RFIs issued by Wyden in recent months, the policies outlined in the document could inform the Democratic agenda should the party regain control of one or both chambers of Congress next year.

Upcoming Congressional Hearings and Markups

Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health Care hearing “Building a Resilient Health Care Future with Biotechnology;” 10:00 a.m.; August 4

Senate Budget Committee hearing “Medicaid: The Reality;” 10:00 a.m.; August 4

Senate Judiciary Committee hearing “Prescribing Sunshine: How Competition & Transparency Lowers Prescription Drug Costs;” 10:15 a.m.; August 4

Recently Introduced Health Legislation

S.5134 — A bill to establish a Green New Deal for Health to prepare and empower the health care sector to protect the health and well-being of our workers, our communities, and our planet in the face of the climate crisis, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Markey, Edward J. [Sen.-D-MA]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5137 — A bill to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration, to establish a grant program to be known as the Mental Health Licensure Portability Program to award grants to eligible entities, and for other purposes; Sponsor: King, Angus S., Jr. [Sen.-I-ME]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

H.Res.1462 — Recognizing the historic significance of Medicare on the 61st anniversary of its enactment; Sponsor: Mackenzie, Ryan [Rep.-R-PA-7]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce

H.R.9948 — To direct the President to establish an interagency task force to review, and provide recommendations on, the impact of addictive design features on youth mental health, to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish grant programs to support the activities of the task force, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Balint, Becca [Rep.-D-VT-At Large]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Education and Workforce

H.R.9962 — To establish a Green New Deal for Health to prepare and empower the health care sector to protect the health and well-being of our workers, our communities, and our planet in the face of the climate crisis, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Khanna, Ro [Rep.-D-CA-17]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means; Science, Space, and Technology

H.R.9970 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure appropriate payments for ambulance services under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Pfluger, August [Rep.-R-TX-11]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.9972 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to adjust payment for skin substitute products under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Sessions, Pete [Rep.-R-TX-17]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

S.5164 — A bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to make improvements relating to the designation of rural emergency hospitals; Sponsor: Moran, Jerry [Sen.-R-KS]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.5166 — A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to strengthen requirements related to nutrient information on food labels, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Blumenthal, Richard [Sen.-D-CT]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5172 — A bill to amend titles XI, XIX, and XXI of the Social Security Act with respect to screening for childhood-onset fluency disorders, and to require coverage of certain speech therapy services under Medicaid and CHIP; Sponsor: Banks, Jim [Sen.-R-IN]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.5180 — A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure stability for provider payments under the Medicare program; Sponsor: Boozman, John [Sen.-R-AR]; Committees: Senate – Finance

S.5193 — A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to expand the capacity to improve health outcomes and increase access to specialized care; Sponsor: Schatz, Brian [Sen.-D-HI]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5202 — A bill to prohibit the use of Federal funds for gender transition for minors; Sponsor: Lee, Mike [Sen.-R-UT]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

H.R.9981 — To prohibit reductions in force or other staffing reductions for certain Centers of Disease Control and Prevention divisions, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Gottheimer, Josh [Rep.-D-NJ-5]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.9984 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for payment for services of radiologist assistants under the Medicare program, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Joyce, John [Rep.-R-PA-13]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.9988 — To amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to include barley, rye, and oats as major food allergens, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Luna, Anna Paulina [Rep.-R-FL-13]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.9990 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to expand access to psychological and behavioral services; Sponsor: Malliotakis, Nicole [Rep.-R-NY-11]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.9996 — To amend the Public Health Service Act, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for certain health coverage of newborns; Sponsor: Nadler, Jerrold [Rep.-D-NY-12]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Education and Workforce; Ways and Means

H.R.10007 — To prioritize educating and training for existing and new environmental health professionals; Sponsor: Thanedar, Shri [Rep.-D-MI-13]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Education and Workforce

H.R.10012 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to require the Medicare & You handbook to provide information on the impacts of enrollment in the patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs on Medicare premiums, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Williams, Roger [Rep.-R-TX-25]; Committees: House - Ways and Means; Energy and Commerce; Veterans' Affairs