



Health Policy Briefing

August 17, 2026

President Signs Vaccine Executive Order

President Donald Trump signed [executive order](#) (E.O.) 14420 on Monday to recognize “Gold Standard Childhood Vaccine Recommendations.” According to the White House, the order is aimed at maximizing parental choice over vaccinations for their children and aligning the U.S. with the scientific evidence and best practices from peer, developed countries. The E.O. recommends all children get immunizations to provide protection for 11 diseases – a decrease from the 18 diseases recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2024. Immunizations no longer recommended for all children are recommended for shared clinical decision-making. The order also recommends separating out the combined MMR vaccine into three single-disease shots, and administering all vaccines during separate medical visits. States that enact school vaccine requirements are advised to consider the Gold Standard Childhood Vaccine Recommendations and consider updating their laws to reflect the recommendations, while all federal agencies are advised to advance the Gold Standard Childhood Vaccine Recommendations based on their relevant authorities. The order has been criticized by many public health experts, who have argued that there is no scientific basis for such changes. The feasibility and potential timeline for vaccine manufacturers to reformulate the MMR vaccine into three distinct shots has also been called into question.

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Cassidy, Sanders Request Update on Steward Health Care Case

Bipartisan leadership of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee have sent a [letter](#) to Attorney General Todd Blanche requesting information on the status of the contempt referral for Dr. Ralph de la Torre, former chairman and CEO of Steward Health Care. The contempt referral was unanimously approved by the Senate in September 2024. Chair Bill Cassidy, MD (R-La.) and Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) outline the committee's prior work to uncover how Steward Health Care's bankruptcy impacted patients, healthcare workers, and communities. "Dr. de la Torre's wealth should not make him immune to requests from Congress," the letter argues, "especially as communities continue to grapple with the consequences of Dr. de la Torre's greed." The lawmakers request an update on the status of the case by August 20.

ASPE Releases Report on Impact of Changes to State-Directed Payments and Medicaid Provider Taxes

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) released a report last week on the potential impact of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act on healthcare costs. The report asserts that provider tax and state-directed payment policies in the law are projected to reduce healthcare prices by up to 3.5%. Once fully phased in, these policies are expected to lower annual healthcare spending by \$100 billion to \$175 billion. ASPE's full research report can be found [here](#).

Sanders Highlights New Medicare for All Study

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) is touting a new study from Yale University finding that Medicare for All would save 114,000 lives and reduce healthcare spending by more than \$1 trillion a year. "This study confirms what we have known for years: Medicare for All saves lives and saves money," Sanders stated. "It would save working families thousands of dollars a year. And it would prevent over 100,000 Americans from dying unnecessarily each and every year because they cannot make it to a doctor in time," he said. The sources of Medicare for All savings identified by the study include reductions in administrative overhead, pharmaceutical prices, fraudulent billing, and avoidable emergency care. The full analysis can be found [here](#).

Incumbent Losses in Tuesday's Primary Elections

Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan defeated Rep. Angie Craig in the Democratic primary to fill the seat of retiring Sen. Tina Smith (D) in the upper chamber. Craig has served in the House of Representatives since 2019, and is the current ranking member of the House Committee on Agriculture. In Connecticut, Rep. John Larson (D) lost his primary race to represent the state's 1st congressional district to former Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin. Larson was first elected to the House in 1998. He currently serves on the House Ways and Means Committee. The special Republican primary to replace the late Sen. Lindsey Graham in South Carolina saw both Sen. Darline Graham and Rep. Ralph Norman advance to a runoff. The winner of the runoff on 25 August will face Annie Andrews, MD, the Democratic nominee and a pediatrician, in November.

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Recently Introduced Health Legislation

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S.Res.848 — A resolution celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the premier public health institute of the United States. Sponsor: Warnock, Raphael G. [Sen.-D-GA]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5382 — A bill to require a report on the artificial intelligence power of the People's Republic of China. Sponsor: Husted, Jon [Sen.-R-OH]; Committees: Senate - Foreign Relations

S.5365 — A bill to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, to award grants to train community mental wellness workers, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Booker, Cory A. [Sen.-D-NJ]; Committees: Senate - Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

S.5361 — A bill to improve the use and management of mobile medical units by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rosen, Jacky [Sen.-D-NV]; Committees: Senate - Veterans' Affairs

S.Res.843 — A resolution expressing support for the designation of the first week of August 2026, as "National Community Health Center Week", encouraging all people of the United States to participate by visiting their local community health center, and celebrating the important partnership between community health centers and the communities they serve. Sponsor: Cornyn, John [Sen.-R-TX]; Submitted in the Senate, considered, and agreed to without amendment and with a preamble by Unanimous Consent

H.R.10072 — To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow individuals entitled to Medicare Part A to make contributions to health savings accounts; Sponsor: Fischbach, Michelle [Rep.-R-MN-7]; Committees: House - Ways and Means

H.R.10086 — To reauthorize the National Diabetes Prevention Program; Sponsor: De La Cruz, Monica [Rep.-R-TX-15]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10087 — To amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage of cancer care planning and coordination under the Medicare program; Sponsor: DeSaulnier, Mark [Rep.-D-CA-10]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means

H.R.10088 — To direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, to conduct a study to assess the potential for expanding the safe and effective use of reprocessed single-use devices, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Foushee, Valerie P. [Rep.-D-NC-4]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10093 — To establish a cancer research trust fund, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Hinson, Ashley [Rep.-R-IA-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10094 — To require persons who undertake federally funded research and development of a biomedical product or service to enter into reasonable pricing agreements with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and for other purposes; Sponsor: Hoyle, Val T. [Rep.-D-OR-4]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce

H.R.10100 — To amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act and title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to provide for no-cost coverage for annual screening mammography beginning at 30 years of age; Sponsor: Neguse, Joe [Rep.-D-CO-2]; Committees: House - Energy and Commerce; Ways and Means