

Hill Updates

- The Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee released a [request for information](#) (RFI) from stakeholders on the Pandemics and All-Hazards Preparedness Act (PAHPA). Comments are due by March 29th.
- Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) and Ranking Member (R-ME) [released](#) the tentative appropriations subcommittee hearings calendar for FY 2024. Here are a few highlighted hearings:
 - Wednesday, March 22: Labor-HHS Subcommittee hearing with Health & Human Services (HHS)
 - Wednesday, March 29: Agriculture Subcommittee hearing with US Department of Agriculture
 - Tuesday, April 18: CJS Subcommittee hearing with the National Science Foundation
 - Wednesday, April 19: Agriculture Subcommittee with the Food and Drug Administration
 - Wednesday, April 26: Military-VA Subcommittee hearing with the Department of Veterans Affairs
 - Thursday, May 4: Labor-HHS Subcommittee hearing with the National Institutes of Health
- Republicans on the Senate Finance Committee sent a [letter](#) to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure encouraging CMS to enact policies to strengthen the Medicare Advantage program.
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Shalanda Young [testified](#) before the Senate Budget Committee on Wednesday about the \$6.9 billion Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 President's Budget. Questions focused on the size of the request, Social Security and Medicare, and other policy priorities.
- Senators introduced three bills focused on supporting rural health care access in response to rural hospital closures:
 - Senators Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and John Hickenlooper (D-CO) introduced a [bill](#) to offer new grants for health centers to hire staff and stay open for longer hours
 - Senators Marsha Blackburn introduced a [bill](#) to provide a loan repayment program for health care providers in areas with severe shortages, and a [bill](#) to increase Medicare payments to rural hospitals
- Senators Rand Paul (R-KY) and Maggie Hassan (D-NH) [introduced bipartisan legislation](#) to streamline the approval process for generic medications. The bill would require FDA to clearly identify specific differences between generic and brand name drugs when considering a generic approval.
- Upcoming Hearings:
 - The Senate Finance Committee will hold a [hearing](#) on Wednesday, March 22 on the FY 2024 Budget Request for HHS.
 - The Senate HELP Committee will hold a [hearing](#) on Wednesday, March 22 on the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and potential price increases being considered by the company.
 - The House Agriculture Committee will hold a [hearing](#) on Thursday, March 23 on USDA's implementation of research programs.

Administration Updates

- Following last week's release of the FY 2024 President's Budget, several agencies have put out their congressional justification documents:
 - HHS:
 - [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
 - [National Institutes of Health](#)
 - [Health Resources and Services Administration](#)
 - [Administration for Children and Families](#)
 - [Administration for Community Living](#)
 - [Food and Drug Administration](#)
 - [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#)
 - [Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
 - [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)
 - [National Science Foundation](#)
 - [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)
 - [Department of Energy](#)
 - [Department of Defense](#)
- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) [published](#) results from a study that showed an artificial pancreas improved blood glucose control in young children between ages 2 and 5 with type 1 diabetes.
- The White House is [facing difficulties](#) filling the vacant position for the Director of the NIH after two top candidates removed themselves from consideration. Issues have been that qualified candidates would have to take a substantial pay cut, and concerns with increased attacks on scientists and medical researchers.
- On March 15, the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) [announced](#) its first [funding opportunity](#) to pursue innovative high-impact biomedical and health research proposals. The agency also selected the Washington D.C. metro area as the first of its three hubs, with two additional sites to be selected this year. The [ARPA-H Dash to Accelerate Health Outcomes](#) was also launched, which is a collaborative online competition that will allow for ARPA-H to solicit the best ideas to enhance the agency's mission.
- CMS released initial [guidance](#) on the requirements and parameters of the new Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Program for 2026, which was passed as part of the Inflation Reduction Act. [Comments](#) will be accepted on several provisions in the guidance by April 14. A fact sheet of the guidance can be found [here](#).

Health Policy Updates

- The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) released its March 2023 [report](#) to Congress on Medicare payment policies. The report includes analyses of payment adequacy in Medicare fee-for-service and reviews the Medicare Advantage and Medicare Part D programs.
- The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics [released](#) data that showed that maternal mortality rose sharply in 2021, with increases occurring among women of all races and ethnicities. However, the maternal mortality rate for non-Hispanic Black women was still 2.6 times the rate for non-Hispanic White women.

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