

EDITION: June 27, 2019



CONGRESSIONAL

Senate HELP Passes Health Cost Legislation

On June 26, the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee passed its [Lower Health Care Costs Act \(S. 1895\)](#) by a vote of 20-3. The legislation includes provisions on surprise billing, drug pricing, transparency, public health and health information exchange. Prior to the markup, provisions raising the minimum age for purchasing tobacco from 18 to 21 and the Creating and Restoring Equal Access to Equivalent Samples (CREATES) Act were added to the bill. Additionally, the only amendment agreed to during the markup would require hospitals to tell patients when their plan has no in-network providers for a certain service. The committee unanimously approved the amendment. The bill is still expected to be combined with a Senate Finance committee bill on drug pricing for a floor vote, with details expected after the fourth of July recess and a final vote before the August recess.

Ways and Means Passes Five Health Care Bills

Yesterday, the House Ways & Means Committee advanced five Medicare-related bills, including legislation to expand coverage of telehealth services for mental health treatment, eliminate beneficiary cost-sharing for chronic care management services, and add 1,000 new residency slots under the Graduate Medical Education (GME) program. The bills passed out of Committee include:

- [The Opioid Workforce Act \(H.R. 3414\)](#)
- [The Beneficiary Education Tools, Telehealth, and Extenders Reauthorization \(BETTER\) Act \(H.R. 3417\)](#)

MACRA HIGHLIGHTS

Check out CMS' latest [podcast](#) on the CMS Innovation Center with how models are developed and future steps.

HEALTH CARE ACTIVITIES ON THE HILL

Both the House and Senate will be in Recess next week for the July 4th Holiday. The Senate will return July 8, and the House will return July 9.

Weekly Trivia

What kind of activities were linked to early celebrations of the Fourth of July?

Click [here](#) for the answer!

- [The Improving Chronic Care Management Act \(H.R. 3436\)](#)
- [The Protecting Access to Information for Effective and Necessary Treatment \(PATIENTS\) Act \(H.R. 3439\)](#)
- [The HEARTS and Rural Relief Act \(H.R. 3429\)](#)

The only bill that was passed in a bipartisan manner, the BETTER Act, would expand Medicare's coverage of telehealth services for mental health treatment by eliminating restrictions on originating sites. Other provisions of that legislation would extend funding for the National Quality Forum, provide outreach and education to individuals before they become eligible for Medicare, and fix a technical issue with the graduate medical education program.

ADMINISTRATION

Executive Order on Health Care Transparency

On June 24, President Trump signed an [Executive Order](#) with the goal of improving health care price transparency and reducing costs. The order defers to agency rulemaking, but instructs the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) within 60 days to release a proposed rule requiring hospitals to publicly post standard charge information including information based on negotiated rates. The order also instructs HHS and the Departments on Labor and Treasury to release an advance notice of proposed rulemaking soliciting comment to require health care providers, health insurance issuers, and self-insured group health plans to provide access to information about out-of-pocket costs.

The order also includes instruction of a inter-agency roadmap to align quality metrics across federal health care programs, expand access for researchers to de-identified health care claims data from federal programs and directs the Department of the Treasury to issue guidance to expand the availability of health savings accounts to pay for more health care services.

HOOPER, LUNDY & BOOKMAN, P.C.

Government Relations and Public Policy

401 9th Street NW, Suite 550 Washington, DC 20004 | Telephone 202.580.7700

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