

**EDITION:** June 20, 2019



## CONGRESSIONAL

### Senate HELP Introduces Health Cost Legislation

Yesterday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee formally introduced their bipartisan [legislation](#) to reduce health care costs which includes provisions on surprise billing, drug pricing, transparency, public health and health information exchange. The legislation, the [Lower Health Care Costs Act \(S. 1895\)](#) follows a discussion draft which received over 400 comments and a hearing earlier this week. The Committee intends to vote on the legislation on June 26 and combine it with drug pricing legislation expected from Senate Finance Committee in the coming weeks, for a floor vote prior to the August Recess.

The bills' section on surprise billing has been one of the more popular areas being monitored, especially after months of various Congressional committee activity and legislative drafts having been [introduced](#). The House has their own draft version they are expected to move forward with, however, the Lower Health Care Costs Act provisions uses a rate-setting at the median in-network rate similar to the House bill.

### House Passes HHS Funding Bill amid Budget Negotiations

On June 19, the House passed a largely partisan federal government funding bill in an attempt to avert a government shutdown before the September 30 deadline. The legislation, which includes the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), will likely not go far in the Senate, as House and Senate leaders continue to negotiate with the White House on

## 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

**Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee**  
6/26 at 10:30am: Full Committee [Executive Session](#) on the Poison Center Network Enhancement Act, Emergency Medical Services for Children Reauthorization Act and the Lower Health Care Costs Act.

**House Energy and Commerce Committee**  
6/25 at 10:00am: Health subcommittee [hearing](#) title; "Reauthorization Vital Health Programs for American Families."

## Weekly Trivia

Where do Washington DC's black squirrels come from?

a larger budget deal. The House has two other spending bills for other government agencies they will continue to work into a final package to pass in the next week.

Click [here](#) for the answer!

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### **June MedPAC Report Released**

On June 14, the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) released its [June 2019 Report to Congress](#) on Medicare and health care delivery system. The Report includes chapters on Part D specialty drugs, price competition for Part B drugs, the Medicare Shared Savings Program, Medicare Advantage programs, and post-acute care.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **HRA Final Rule Released**

On June 13, the Department of the Treasury, along with the Department of Health and Human Services released its Health Reimbursement Arrangements (HRAs) and Other Account-Based Group Health Plans [Final Rule](#). The rule will allow employers to provide subsidies to buy individual market coverage and establish new “excepted benefit HRAs.” This will apply beginning January 1, 2020.

### **Part D Prior Authorization Proposal Released**

On June 17, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released its Secure Electronic Prior Authorization for Medicare Part D [proposed rule](#) following the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs’ SCRIPT standard. This proposed rule was required by last year’s opioid bill and is intended to ease the submission of prior authorization requests through web portals, rather than fax or paper. Comments will be accepted through August 16.

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### **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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