



H&K Health Dose: May 24, 2022

A weekly dose of healthcare policy news

Legislative Updates

House Energy and Commerce Committee Marks Up User Fee, Mental Health and ARPA-H Bills

The House Energy and Commerce Committee advanced six healthcare bills to the floor on May 18, 2022. The *Food and Drug Amendments of 2022* (H.R. 7667) would reauthorize medical product user fee programs at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for another five years. Also approved by voice vote was the *Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act* (H.R. 7666), which would reauthorize key programs within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) that address national mental health and substance use disorders.

The committee also approved the *Advanced Research Project Agency-Health Act* (H.R. 5585) by a vote of 53-3. This is notable, as it authorizes ARPA-H within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), conflicting with the Biden Administration's efforts already underway to establish ARPA-H within the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Other bills approved by the committee include the *Keeping Incarceration Discharges Streamlined for Children and Accommodating Resources in Education Act* (H.R. 7233), *Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0* (H.R. 623) and the *South Asian Heart Health Awareness and Research Act of 2021* (H.R. 3771).

Insulin Cap Bill Awaiting a CBO Score

Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) said they are waiting for a cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) on their legislation to lower the price of insulin and cap patients' costs for their medication. Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-Ga.), whose bill to cap what people pay for insulin at \$35 per month is being combined with the Collins-Shaheen proposal, had pushed for a May vote on the insulin legislation. The need for a CBO score means that Senate consideration of the proposal is not likely to take place until later this summer. CBO found that a similar proposal introduced in the House of Representatives ([H.R. 6833](#)) would increase federal spending by more than \$6.5 billion. It remains to be seen whether the bipartisan legislation can garner the 60 votes necessary to pass the Senate.

Senators Reach Deal on Veteran Toxic Exposure Bill

Bipartisan leadership of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee has reached an agreement to consider legislation to support veterans who have been exposed to toxic substances during military deployments. The agreement bridges the divides between two related measures passed in each chamber of Congress this year and clears the path for a bipartisan bill to become law. The deal is based on the *Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act* ([H.R. 3967](#)), introduced by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chair Mark Takano (D-Calif.). The bill would provide service veterans access to medical care and disability benefits by establishing presumptions of service connection related to toxic exposure and adding 23 burn pit and toxic exposure-related conditions to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) list of service presumptions.



Regulatory Updates

U.S. Surgeon General Issues New Advisory on Health Worker Burnout

On May 23, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a new advisory on health worker burnout offering several recommendations, including reducing administrative burdens and expanding the workforce. According to the HHS press release, mass retirements will drive an anticipated shortage of 1.1 million registered nurses, exacerbated by a national shortage of more than 3 million low-wage health workers in the next five years. The advisory follows an Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) report released earlier this month on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the healthcare workforce.

FDA Advisors to Review COVID-19 Vaccines for Children Under 5

The FDA announced that its vaccine advisers would tentatively meet on June 14 and 15 to discuss Pfizer's and Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines for kids ages 6 months to 5 years.

CMS Launches Beneficiary Website, Webinar Series to Prepare for Medicaid/CHIP Revalidations Resuming Post-PHE

As part of ongoing efforts to prepare for the restart of Medicaid/Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) redeterminations once the COVID Public Health Emergency (PHE) ends, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Control (CMS) will kick off a monthly stakeholder webinar series on May 25. Interested stakeholders can [register on the CMS website](#). Earlier this week, the agency also launched a new patient-facing webpage to help Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries renew their coverage. Up to 15 million Americans stand to lose coverage when the PHE ends and redeterminations resume. As reported in last week's Health Dose, most suspect the PHE will be renewed for at least one additional 90-day cycle through mid-October.

Abbott, FDA Agree on Plan to Reopen Baby Formula Plant, But End to Shortage Still Weeks Away

Baby formula manufacturer Abbott Laboratories has reached a settlement with the FDA to reopen its Michigan facility. Once the FDA confirms that initial requirements have been satisfied, the plant could reopen within two weeks. From there, it likely will still be several weeks until the new supply reaches store shelves. As part of its settlement, Abbott agreed to fix multiple sanitary-related compliance concerns identified by the FDA in its plant inspection earlier this year. The Biden Administration previously announced other ways to help address the shortage, including encouraging imports of foreign products and encouraging states to allow WIC benefits used in nearly half of formula purchases nationwide to cover a broader range of products.