The following information comes from directly from news sources including Bloomberg Government, Kaiser Health News, and other news sources.

**Schedules: White House and Congress**

**WHITE HOUSE:**

- President Joe Biden will speak at 12:35 p.m. on efforts to strengthen supply chains during the holiday season.

- Biden also plans to give remarks at 2:30 p.m. along with Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra to commemorate World AIDS Day, and launch a national HIV/AIDS strategy.

- The president, First Lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff will hold a Menorah Lighting at 5:30 p.m. in celebration of Hanukkah.

**CONGRESS:**

- The House meets at 10 a.m., as leaders look to find a path forward on a stopgap spending measure. The chamber could also consider a collection of broadly bipartisan bills under expedited procedure.

- Senators convene at noon to continue debate on the annual defense policy bill, which has stalled amid procedural hurdles.

- A Facebook whistleblower will appear before a House committee to testify on legislation to overhaul technology platforms' legal liability shield. Click here for a complete list of today’s hearings and markups.

**Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News**

- **Modern Healthcare: Pharmacists Ask CMS To Require COVID-19 Pill Dispensing Fee:** Medicare Part D plans should be required to pay pharmacists for counseling patients and dispensing oral antiviral medications that treat COVID-19, organizations representing druggists say. Several promising COVID-19 treatments have emerged in recent weeks, led by a Merck drug that a Food and Drug Administration advisory panel recommended be approved for emergency use on Tuesday. But while the Health and Human Services Department authorized pharmacists to administer covered COVID-19 therapeutics in September, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services hasn't mandated that health plans pay pharmacists for giving out the medicines.

- **Modern Healthcare: Health Systems Reconfigure Workforce Amid Shortages:** Hospital labor costs continue to rise as nurses seek higher pay, requiring providers to reconfigure their workforce. Total labor expenses rose 12.6% from October 2020 to October 2021, and 14.8%
from October 2019 to October 2021, according to Kaufman Hall's analysis of around 900 hospitals. Full-time equivalents per adjusted bed decreased 4.5% year over year while labor expense per adjusted discharge increased 16.3%, suggesting higher salaries prompted by nationwide labor shortages are driving up labor expenses rather than increased staffing levels, the report concluded.

- **Bloomberg Government: The U.S. Supreme Court wrestled with a healthcare dispute that could end up with courts giving the government less deference on thorny questions across all areas of law:** At issue at yesterday’s oral arguments in the Medicare case was a technical question regarding drug reimbursement rates the U.S. pays to hospitals caring after underserved communities. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit said that the statutory language was unclear and deferred to the Health and Human Services Department’s interpretation under the “Chevron deference.”

- **Bloomberg Government: Stopgap Spending Bill Stalls as Deadline Nears:** Talks to fund the government and avert a weekend shutdown stalled yesterday as House lawmakers waited for their Senate counterparts to decide on the length of the stopgap, Democrats said. Lawmakers will have to act quickly to pass a stopgap and avoid a shutdown after midnight Friday night.
  - House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) told reporters yesterday the House could vote as early as today on a continuing resolution. But later in the day, he said talks with the Senate are holding up the bill. Possible consideration of a continuing resolution is listed on Hoyer’s House floor schedule for today.
  - Even if the House passes a stopgap measure today, the Senate will have limited time to pass the measure before Friday night’s deadline. Advancement in the Senate will need cooperation from Republicans, who may not lend assistance as Democrats rush to expedite a vote.
  - Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said in floor remarks yesterday that Democrats are “ready to pass this legislation and to get it done as quickly as possible.” But, he acknowledged he’ll need help from the GOP, adding that “to avoid a needless shutdown, Republicans will have to cooperate and approve the government funding legislation without delay. If Republicans choose obstruction, there will be a shutdown entirely because of their own dysfunction.”

- **The Washington Post: Nursing Unions Around The World File U.N. Complaint Over Vaccine Patent Waivers:** On Monday, nurses unions from around the world filed a complaint with the United Nations, accusing some wealthy nations of violating human rights by blocking waivers that they say are critical to equitably expanding vaccine access and keeping health workers safe. The move comes as the World Trade Organization postponed what was to be its biggest meeting in four years — an in-person forum to debate calls to waive intellectual property protections for coronavirus vaccines, which the United States in theory has endorsed — after news of the omicron variant spread Friday.

- **The Wall Street Journal: Some Hospitals Charge Up To 10 Times More For Medical Scans Than Others, Study Finds:** Some hospitals charge up to 10 times as much as others for standard medical scans, according to the latest analysis of previously secret market rates. Median prices for taking images of the brain, legs, abdomen and chest differed across hospitals by thousands of dollars in some cases, a team of researchers from Johns Hopkins and Michigan State universities reported Tuesday in the journal Radiology. Their analysis
compared median commercial prices among hospitals that complied with new federal rules this year to make rates public.