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

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE:

- The president is scheduled to deliver remarks at 2:30 p.m. on the administration’s plans to fight the current Covid-19 surge.

CONGRESS:

- Out of Session.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- The Washington Post: Vaccine Mandates: Biden's Policies Arrive At Supreme Court: The Biden administration’s coronavirus protection requirements intended to persuade millions of health-care and other workers to get vaccinated are taking center stage at the Supreme Court. More than half the states and coalitions of business and religious groups are asking the justices for emergency action to block the administration’s nationwide vaccine-or-testing mandate for large businesses, which would cover about 80 million workers.

- Bloomberg Government: Cheaper Insulin Is Second to Win FDA Approval: Americans living with diabetes now have another option for insulin treatment after the Food and Drug Administration approved a second lower-cost product that acts nearly identical to the biologic drug. The FDA yesterday gave the green light to Eli Lilly’s biosimilar Rezvoglar as part of the office’s efforts to promote competition among insulin makers and ease access for patients. The approval means the drug has no clinically meaningful differences from Sanofi’s Lantus and can be prescribed as an alternative.

- Bloomberg Government: On health-care provisions, Manchin said he’s supportive of the package’s drug-price negotiation efforts but warned the current version may exclude too many new drugs. The legislation would subject only older drugs — some more than a decade after first approval — to government negotiations, and also pave the way for a major expansion of Medicaid.

- Modern Healthcare: Transport Congestion Causing Lengthy Delays For Medical Supplies: Hospitals and other providers are experiencing lags in the delivery of between 8,000-12,000 containers of critical medical supplies and equipment, a setback that could negatively impact patient care and public health. Healthcare resources are being delayed an average of up to 37 days throughout the U.S. transportation system due to supply chain congestion, according to research from the Health Industry Distributors Association. Medical shipments are being held up at U.S. ports for around 17 days. The Long Beach and Los Angeles ports in California have
the largest number of delayed medical containers on the West Coast. The Port of Savannah, Georgia is the most congested on the Eastern Seaboard, the association reports.

- **Bloomberg Government: Nursing Homes Seek Approval to Restrict Visits As Omicron Surges:** The nursing home industry—bracing for a spike in Covid-19 infections due to the omicron variant—has asked the Biden administration to amend current guidelines requiring them to provide unlimited, unrestricted visitation for residents and preventing them from restricting access to the facilities. The agency’s updated November guidance on visitation appears to forbid “any restriction on visitation, regardless of staffing levels, community positivity rates, or severity of facility outbreak,” officials from three leading industry trade groups said in a Dec. 17 letter.

- **Modern Healthcare: Report: 10 Private Equity-Backed Healthcare Providers Will Go Public In 2022:** More private equity firms took their healthcare provider portfolio companies public in 2021 than ever before, and one research firm thinks the number will almost double in 2022. Data analytics and research firm PitchBook predicts at least 10 private equity-backed healthcare provider platforms will list publicly next year, breaking 2021's record of six such IPOs. The prediction was part of PitchBook's 2022 U.S. private equity outlook. Six PE-backed healthcare provider IPOs in a year might not sound like a lot, but it compares with between zero and two in each of the previous 10 years, PitchBook found.

- **The Washington Post: WHO Says Holiday Events Should Be Canceled Amid Omicron Spread:** The director general of the World Health Organization on Monday urged people to cancel upcoming events as part of a global effort to avoid “increased cases, overwhelmed health systems and more deaths” over the holiday season amid the spread of the omicron variant. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus’s remarks to journalists come as the new variant is quickly infecting more and more people just before the Christmas holiday. At least 48 U.S. states and 89 countries have reported cases. An unvaccinated Houston-area man in his 50s is believed to be the first to die in the United States after being infected by omicron.

- **Modern Healthcare: Oracle To Buy Cerner For $28.3 Billion:** Oracle on Monday said it plans to acquire electronic health records giant Cerner in a deal valued at $28.3 billion. The Austin, Texas-based tech giant will acquire Kansas City, Missouri-based Cerner through an all-cash tender offer of $95 per share in a transaction expected to close in 2022. The transaction is subject to certain regulatory approvals and closing conditions, including Cerner stockholders agreeing to sell a majority of Cerner's outstanding shares as part of Oracle's offer.

- **Bloomberg Government: Moderna Says Third Shot Fights Omicron:** A third shot of Moderna’s coronavirus vaccine increased antibody levels against the omicron variant, results the company described as reassuring while it works on a shot tailored to the new strain. A 50 microgram booster dose produced a 37-fold increase in neutralizing antibodies, the company said in a statement yesterday. That is the same dosage as the currently authorized Moderna booster, which is half of the dose used for primary immunization.