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:

- Biden will host a meeting at 10:30 a.m. this morning at the White House with members of his Cabinet and the private sector to discuss global supply chain bottlenecks and the pandemic.

- White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki will hold a briefing at 12:30 p.m. and the White House’s Covid-19 response team will hold a briefing at 3 p.m.

CONGRESS:

- Out of Session.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Appropriations Bills Tee Up Research Fund Increase:** Federal spending on research and development in health — primarily through the National Institutes of Health — would see one of the largest increases in raw dollars under both House and Senate appropriations plans, according to an analysis by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
  - Health R&D funding would increase 12.9% to $49.1 billion under the House plan (H.R. 4502) and 9.5% to $47.6 billion under the Senate plan (S. 3062), both of which are lower than the $51.2 billion requested by the Biden administration. About half that money would go toward building the proposed new Advanced Research Projects Agency - Health, and the rest would be spread throughout the NIH.
  - Those increases are part of an overall 2022 R&D spending package that could range between $169.4 billion to $171.1 billion, including floor amendments. “Even with the rocky situation with the reconciliation package, Congress is actually teeing up one of the largest science funding increases in many years, by our estimates,” Matt Hourihan, director of AAAS’s R&D budget and policy program, said in a statement.

- **The pandemic helped push U.S. life expectancy down to 77 years in 2020**, a drop of 1.8 years from 2019, with bigger declines for men than women and for Black and Hispanic Americans than their White peers, according to final data newly released by the National Center for Health Statistics. Covid-19, newly added to the list, became the third-biggest cause of death, accounting for more than 10% of the 3.4 million resident deaths registered in the year, the agency said.
  - There were sharp increases in other causes of death too, reflecting broader strains caused by the pandemic and difficulties accessing medical treatment. From 2019 to 2020, age-adjusted death rates increased 4.1% for heart disease, 16.8% for unintentional
injuries, 4.9% for strokes, 8.7% for Alzheimer disease, 14.8% for diabetes, and 5.7% for influenza and pneumonia.

- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Sees Path Forward for Build Back Better**: Biden yesterday said he still has a chance to strike a deal with Manchin to get his roughly $2 trillion economic plan through Congress. “I still think there’s a possibility of getting Build Back Better done,” Biden told reporters.
  - Separately, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) convened a virtual meeting of Senate Democrats last night to discuss Build Back Better and other issues. Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) took part in the meeting, according to a person familiar with the matter. Schumer, during the call, said he wants a vote in January on a revised version of the Biden economic plan, the person said.

- **The Washington Post: Biden’s Omicron Battle Plan Includes At-Home Tests, Hospital Support**: President Biden sought to recast the fight against the coronavirus pandemic on Tuesday, insisting the United States would not lock down or close schools despite surging cases driven by the new, highly transmissible omicron variant. Instead, Biden argued that Americans who are vaccinated and boosted remain largely protected from severe illness and should plan to celebrate the holidays with family and friends as normal.

- **Modern Healthcare: Commercial Prices For Common Hospital Procedures Often Exceed Cash Prices**: The discounted cash prices hospitals set for common procedures are often lower than the rates they negotiate with insurers, new research shows. The proportion of hospitals that set their cash price below their median commercial negotiated price ranged from 38.4% for liver tests to 68.5% for C-section deliveries, according to an analysis of 922 hospitals’ rates for what CMS calls "shoppable" services. Hospitals were less likely to disclose the prices of more expensive services, the study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open found. The findings surprised researchers, who expected commercially negotiated rates to be lower because an individual has less bargaining power than insurers.

- **The Washington Post: Possible Weapon Against Omicron: Early Use Of Convalescent Plasma Reduced Hospitalizations**: Convalescent plasma may be another tool to help prevent coronavirus infections sparked by the omicron variant from turning severe if patients receive it soon after developing symptoms, according to data presented Tuesday. ... Scientists from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine published findings showing that giving plasma early during the course of illness reduced hospitalization by half in a clinical trial that spanned from June 2020 to October 2021.