

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, June 23, 2021

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

- 11:00am – President Biden attends and delivers remarks at the funeral ceremony of Senator John Warner
- 12:45pm – Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki
- 2:15pm – President Biden and Attorney General meet with stakeholders to discuss ways the Biden-Harris Administration is acting to keep cities safe
- 3:30pm – President Biden and the Attorney General deliver remarks on the Administration’s gun crime prevention strategy

CONGRESS:

- The House will consider a bill that would change the burden of proof for workplace age- or disability-related discrimination claims. The chamber will also consider 16 measures under expedited procedure.
- The Senate will consider two of Biden’s judicial nominees.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Wyden Unveils Principles on Drug Pricing:** Senate Finance Chairman Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) yesterday laid out what he wants to see in a major drug pricing reform package, hewing closely to what Democratic leaders have already proposed. Wyden told reporters yesterday he’s working on a drug pricing package “in parallel” with discussions around a bipartisan infrastructure deal led by the White House, which so far has not included drug pricing provisions.
- **Modern Healthcare: CMS Offers \$20M To State-Based Insurance Marketplaces:** CMS plans to distribute \$20 million in grants to state-based marketplaces that will finance technology upgrades to improve performance and the consumer experience. The grants, part of the American Rescue Plan Act, are meant to assist SBMs in complying with federal marketplace requirements and in providing quicker insurance enrollment and eligibility determinations. For states with currently approved SBMs, these grants will act as a form of federal maintenance funding, said Adam Block, a New York-based health economist and former CMS regulator.

- NPR: Fauci Warns Dangerous Delta Variant Is The Greatest Threat To U.S. COVID Efforts:** The dangerous Delta variant of the coronavirus is spreading so quickly in the United States that it's likely the mutant strain will become predominant in the nation within weeks, according to federal health officials and a new analysis. At a White House briefing on COVID-19 on Tuesday, Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health said 20.6% of new cases in the U.S. are due to the Delta variant. And other scientists tracking the variant say it is on track to become the dominant virus variant in the U.S. "The Delta variant is currently the greatest threat in the U.S. to our attempt to eliminate COVID-19," Fauci said.
- Modern Healthcare: Five Blues Plans Launch New For-Profit Company To Lower Drug Prices:** Five Blue Cross Blue Shield plans have launched a new for-profit pharmacy solutions company to combat drug costs, which comprise an ever-growing share of their budgets, the insurers announced today. The Denver-based company, called Evio, will use data from the plans' more than 20 million members across the U.S. to collect real-world evidence into how drugs actually perform, especially across specific patient types and with certain comorbidities. One of the goals is to get drugmakers to agree to outcomes-based contracts, where the plans pay in accordance with drugs' effectiveness.
- Bloomberg Government: Covid-19's Wallop Reached 2 of 5 Medicare Nursing Home Residents:** About 40% of Medicare beneficiaries in nursing homes were diagnosed with Covid-19 in 2020 or were likely infected, including half of Black, Hispanic, and Asian enrollees and 41% of white beneficiaries, new federal data shows.

 - o In addition, nearly 1,000 more beneficiaries died each day in nursing homes in April 2020 than in 2019, according to the report by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General. In that month alone, 81,484 Medicare beneficiaries in nursing homes died.