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

- Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris are scheduled to meet with their national security team today at 10:45 a.m. to hear updates on the situation in Afghanistan.

- At 1 p.m. Biden will deliver remarks on the evacuation of U.S. citizens and vulnerable Afghans.

CONGRESS:

- Out of Session

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- Bloomberg Government: Deaths Hit February Level as ICUs Overflow: Covid-19 patients are dying in U.S. hospitals at levels not seen since February, and the numbers could worsen as intensive-care units overflow in parts of the South. In Alabama, there are now more people in ICUs statewide than there are staffed beds available, data from the Health and Human Services Department show. Florida, Mississippi, Georgia and Texas are all using more than 90% of their ICU capacity.

- Modern Healthcare: It's Time To Get Ready For The Surprise Billing Ban, Experts Say: It's time for hospitals and health systems to start getting ready for the surprise billing ban that takes effect next year. President Joe Biden's administration published an interim final rule last month that covers the basics, but left out essential details about how the No Surprises Act will work in practice. The regulation bars surprise bills for emergency care, high cost-sharing for out-of-network services, out-of-network charges from ancillary providers such as anesthesiologists or assistant surgeons, and out-of-network charges from providers who don't notify patients they are not in-network.

- Bloomberg Government: Delta Could Require More Jobless Aid, Walsh Says: The spread of the delta variant could force even U.S. states that cut off extra unemployment benefits early, like Florida, to offer additional jobless aid, Labor Secretary Marty Walsh said. “If Florida has to shut down—let’s say the numbers continue to climb in the next week or two, and it gets to the point where people are just afraid to go outside,” Walsh said, “then there’s gonna have to be a safety net there.”
  - Also yesterday, the Biden administration told lawmakers that it’s “appropriate” for expanded unemployment benefits to expire as scheduled in a little more than two
weeks, but that states and local governments can use pandemic-relief funds for added help beyond its deadline. “There are some states where it may make sense for unemployed workers to continue receiving additional assistance for a longer period of time,” Walsh and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen wrote.

- Applications for U.S. state unemployment benefits dropped for a fourth consecutive week, a trend that suggests labor market conditions are improving as the economy recovers. Initial unemployment claims in regular state programs fell 29,000 to 348,000 in the week ended Aug. 14, a pandemic low, U.S. data showed yesterday.

- The Hill: CDC Director: Annual COVID-19 Dose After Booster Not Anticipated: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky on Thursday said that while the CDC is recommending booster COVID-19 shots, annual shots going forward may not be necessary. "You know, this virus has been humbling, so I don't want to say never, but we are not necessarily anticipating that you will need this annually," Walensky said told host Tony Dokoupil during an appearance on "CBS This Morning." "It does look like after this third dose you get a really robust response, and so we will continue to follow the science both on the vaccine side but also on the virus side," she said.

- Politico: Sens. Wicker, King, Hickenlooper Test Positive For Covid-19 After Vaccination: Sens. Roger Wicker, Angus King and John Hickenlooper all have Covid-19 breakthrough infections, their respective offices announced Thursday. Wicker, a Republican from Mississippi, and King, an independent from Maine who caucuses with Democrats, both tested positive for the virus following mild symptoms, according to their statements, released earlier in the day. Later on Thursday, Hickenlooper, a Democrat from Colorado, announced that he, too, tested positive following mild symptoms.