

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, September 7, 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

- Biden is scheduled to arrive in New York after 11 a.m.
- He plans to attend a briefing at 12:15 p.m. at the Somerset County Emergency Management Training Center in Hillsborough Township, N.J.
- He'll tour Manville, N.J. at 2:10 p.m.
- Biden is scheduled to deliver remarks on the administration's hurricane response in Queens at 4 p.m.

CONGRESS:

- Out of Session

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Expanding Medicare Eligibility:** More than 125 Democratic House lawmakers – led by Reps. Pramila Jayapal (Wash.), Conor Lamb (Pa.), Joe Neguse (Colo.), Susan Wild (Pa.), Haley Stevens (Mich.), and Debbie Dingell (Mich.) – are backing legislation that would lower the Medicare eligibility age to 60 from 65. The effort would expand Medicare to at least 23 million people.
- **KHN: 'My Time To Live': Through Novel Program, Kidney Patients Get Palliative Care, Dialysis 'Til The End:** Seattle's Northwest Kidney Centers, which pioneered kidney failure treatment 50 years ago, now pairs dying patients with hospice services, without forcing them to forgo the comfort dialysis can provide.
- **Bloomberg Government: Nursing Home Management, Accountability Overhaul:** Reps. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-N.J.) and Richard E. Neal (D-Mass.) unveiled legislation that would update federal nursing home policy by putting in place minimum staffing standards and provide additional resources for their staff. "The COVID-19 pandemic was a wake-up call that we must do more to protect people in nursing homes. This legislation will increase oversight of nursing homes and provide the resources necessary to improve the quality of care across the nation," Pallone said in a statement.

- Bloomberg Government: Medicare Health Quality Measures Get Closer Look:** The Covid-19 pandemic is the nudge the Medicare and Medicaid agency needed to rethink what quality measures it asks providers to report, health policy experts said. The industry is questioning the utility of having so many quality measures at a moment when doctors and resources are stretched thin. Providers said the measures can be easy to game and arduous to report, and they're expensive for themselves and the government. Studies have shown some measures may not lead to higher quality care.

 - The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services spent more than \$1.3 billion on quality measure development between 2008 and 2018, according to a 2020 study published in the JAMA Network Open. The measures translate to more than \$15.4 billion in spending for physicians, with providers in common specialties spending more than 15 hours per physician per week on quality reporting, according to a 2016 study published by Health Affairs.
- Modern Healthcare: CMS Should Collect Home Health Telehealth Data, Experts Say:** The Centers for Medicare and Medicare Services should collect data about telehealth use in home health to guide policymakers in setting reimbursement rates for providers, experts said during the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission's September meeting on Friday. CMS adjusted how the Medicare program pays providers under the home health prospective payment system in 2020 after Congress mandated changes to those payments in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. Under the Patient-Driven Groupings Model, CMS moved from a 60- to 30-day payment unit and stopped basing payments on the number of therapy visits to curb their use.
- Modern Healthcare: Healthcare Employment Contracted In August, The Second Decline This Year:** For the second time in 2021, healthcare hiring crossed into negative territory, the latest jobs report show. Healthcare employment contracted by an estimated 4,900 jobs in August, preliminary data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show. That's after a healthy rebound in July that saw 29,100 new hires. Home health saw the biggest losses last month, as an estimated 11,600 jobs disappeared. These providers have struggled even more than others to recover since employment plummeted early in the COVID-19 pandemic.
- AP: Jobless Americans Will Have Few Options As Benefits Expire:** Millions of jobless Americans lost their unemployment benefits on Monday, leaving only a handful of economic support programs for those who are still being hit financially by the year-and-a-half-old coronavirus pandemic. Two critical programs expired on Monday. One provided jobless aid to self-employed and gig workers and another provided benefits to those who have been unemployed more than six months. Further, the Biden administration's \$300 weekly supplemental unemployment benefit also ran out on Monday. It's estimated that roughly 8.9 million Americans will lose all or some of these benefits.
- Stat: Biden Wants \$65 Billion For 'Apollo'-Style Pandemic Preparedness Program:** The Biden administration on Friday unveiled a sweeping new biosecurity plan, outlining a \$65 billion proposal to remake the nation's pandemic preparedness infrastructure in the wake of Covid-19. The new spending would represent one of the largest investments in public health in American history: During a press briefing, Eric Lander, the White House science adviser, likened the proposal to the Apollo program of the late 1960s.