

Special Needs Alliance:

Public Policy News You Can Use



September 22, 2025

CCD SSTF Submits Testimony to House Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee

On Tuesday, September 9th, Tracey Gronniger, Justice in Aging Managing Director of Economic Security and Housing and the Consortium for Constituents for Disabilities (CCD) Social Security Task Force (SSTF) Co-Chair, submitted testimony to the House Ways & Means Subcommittee on Oversight. In anticipation of the subcommittee's September 16th hearing on [Virtue Signaling vs. Vital Services: Where Tax-Exempt Hospitals are Spending your Tax Dollars](#), Gronniger outlined the importance of the Social Security Act (SSA) including Social Security and other benefits to people with disabilities, families, and older adults. She argued Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are vital payments to millions of older adults and people living with disabilities. Gronniger noted that those who would like to work face barriers including complex program rules and requirements and a lack of dedicated, trained staff to support beneficiaries. She called on Congress to protect those who are too sick or impaired to work and ensure that people who want to work can without jeopardizing their access to SSDI, SSI, and other SSA benefits.

CMS Discusses Implementation of Work Requirements and Eligibility Determinations in OBBBA

Leaders from the Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services (CMCS) within the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) shared additional details on how it expects to implement Medicaid changes outlined in the [One Big Beautiful Bill Act](#) (OBBBA). In addition to significant changes in Medicaid provider taxes and state directed payments, the OBBBA has mandated additional eligibility checks for the expansion population and, beginning in 2027, new work requirements for all adults aged 19-64. These requirements add significant administrative burden on states, which they are working to understand and prepare for.

According to reporting from Inside Health Policy, CMS officials [suggested](#) states could use third-party automated systems that are currently being used to conduct ex parte eligibility determinations to verify that Medicaid enrollees are meeting work requirements. CMCS Acting Director Caprice Knapp also shared on a [Kaiser Family Foundation webinar](#) that CMS is developing new resources to aid in the transition, including an income verification app that is currently being piloted in Louisiana and Arizona. This app is designed to assist states in tracking eligibility for Medicaid expansion enrollees and will be a part of the \$200 million allocated in the OBBBA for implementing the community engagement requirements.

Inside Health Policy also reports that CMS plans to issue a rule in December 2025 outlining requirements for more frequent enrollee eligibility determinations for the Medicaid expansion population. An interim final rule is expected by June 1, 2026, outlining federal regulations for work requirements and related enforcement.

Congress Appears Uninterested in Trump-Proposed Budget Cuts to Disability Programs

In early May, President Trump [released](#) the Presidential Budget, which represents the president's recommendations for Congress. In his budget, President Trump requested to alter the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), eliminate funding for University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), and cut funding for key disability programs. 14 former Department of Education officials from Republican and Democratic administrations [joined](#) advocates in urging Congress to not alter IDEA and other disability services funding. Thus far, Senate and House appropriations committees have dismissed the administrations requests, instead supporting bills that continue full funding for UCEDDs, IDEA under the current structure, and other protection and advocacy agencies. However, advocates are continuing to place pressure on their representatives to ensure future funding negotiations do not compromise services for people with disabilities.

Senate Blocks House Bill Funding the Government

On Friday September 19th, House Republicans passed a [continuing resolution](#) (CR) that would have funded the government through November 21st, preserving Medicare telehealth flexibilities, extending the Hospital-at-Home program, delaying Medicaid disproportionate share hospital (DSH) cuts, and addressing other expiring health care programs tied to the government's active funding status. However, the House Republicans' CR did not include an extension for the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) enhanced premium tax credits (APTCs) which are set to expire at the end of the calendar year.

Senate Democrats have stated they are unwilling to consider a CR unless it included an extension of the ACA APTCs. In accordance with their public position, the Senate [voted against](#) the House CR 44-48 with 8 Republican Senators not voting. Senator John Fetterman (D-PA) was the only Democrat to join Republicans in support of the CR whereas Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Rand Paul (R-KY) joined the Democratic coalition in opposition of the resolution.

Earlier last week, Senate Democrats [proposed their own CR](#), which [would have](#) extended government funding through October 31st, limited President Trump's ability to withhold money Congress had approved, restored nearly \$1 trillion in Medicaid spending cuts, and provided nearly \$200 million to improve security for Members of Congress. Also on Friday the 19th, Senate Republicans [defeated](#) the Senate Democrats' CR in a 47-45 vote along party lines.

As the September 30th deadline approaches, neither party [appears](#) interested in negotiating to prevent a shutdown. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer has stated that Democrats are unwilling to move on certain health policy positions after the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. On the other side of the aisle, Republicans are poised to blame Democrats for a potential shutdown. In fact, House members were advised that the House will not be in session on September 29th and 30th, leaving the chamber unable to act quickly if a compromise were reached in the Senate in the final days of the fiscal year.

RFK Jr. Appoints Five More Members to Vaccine Panel

On Monday, September 15th, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. [added five members](#) to serve on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Many of the new members were critical of the COVID-19 pandemic response or have faced charges of spreading misinformation. The new members are:

- Kirk Milhoan, a pediatric cardiologist and former U.S. Air Force flight surgeon charged with spreading COVID-19 misinformation
- Catherine Stein, a professor and epidemiologist who called for an end to vaccine mandates and criticized Ohio's models for developing its policy response to COVID-19
- Hilary Blackburn, a pharmacist and director of medication access and affordability
- Raymond Pollak, a surgeon and transplant specialist who brought a whistleblower case against the University of Illinois for diagnosing patients as sicker than they were
- Evelyn Griffin, an OB-GYN with additional training in lifestyle and functional medicine

The new members were added three days prior to ACIP's next meeting, which is planned to focus on the Measles, Mumps, Rubella, and Varicella (MMRV) vaccine, the Hepatitis B vaccine, and the COVID-19 vaccine.

ACIP Convenes to Discuss Vaccine Schedules Amid Public Mistrust Issues

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) held its latest meeting on September 18th and 19^t to discuss vaccine policy. At the meeting, ACIP [voted to](#):

- Unanimously recommend COVID-19 vaccinations to individuals 6 months old or older using only individual decision-making centered on individual risk-benefit analysis;
- Change the pediatric vaccine schedule to no longer recommend the combined Measles, Mumps, Rubella, and Varicella (MMRV) vaccine in favor of the separate MMR vaccine and varicella vaccine (MMR+V); and

Although ACIP discussed altering the Hepatitis B vaccination recommendation, the panel declined to vote on a change to the schedule. The recommendations [demonstrate](#) a significant shift in vaccination recommendations away from standardized, community-oriented protection towards individual responsibility and risk analysis. ACIP's recommendations are used by insurance companies and states to identify and ensure coverage of preventative vaccinations according to a preplanned schedule.

ACIP expressed disappointment that the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) was absent and warned that its decision to stop participating could weaken its influence on national vaccine policy. Representatives from the American Medical Association (AMA), American College of Physicians (ACP), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and several other medical organizations were present.

The meeting was held at the same time that the CDC [issued a new priorities](#) statement, focused on trust, transparency, and credibility, while also outlining CDC policy on immigration, gender ideology, parental rights (relating to medical decisions) and other politicized issues aligned with President Trump's agenda.

In response to fracturing public trust in the CDC, states are creating and joining regional health alliances to promote public health and establish vaccination guidance. California, Oregon, and Washington [launched](#) the West Coast Health Alliance and the Northeast Public Health Collaborative [includes](#) officials from Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Former CDC Director and Former CMO Appear in Front of Senate Health Committee

On September 17th, the Senate Health Education Labor & Pensions (HELP) Subcommittee on Health [held a hearing with](#) former Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Susan Monarez and former Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Deb Houry on Monarez' dismissal and the subsequent resignations of high-ranking vaccine officials. In late September, Monarez was terminated by Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in what Monarez [claimed](#) was targeted retribution for her unwillingness to follow his orders. In Monarez's testimony, she alleges that she was fired for refusing Secretary Kennedy's request to get prior approval for personnel and policy decisions, fire some of the CDC's top vaccine officials, and preapprove vaccine recommendations from Secretary Kennedy's hand-picked advisors. Former CDC CMO Dr. Houry testified that she resigned in response to Secretary Kennedy's attempts to weaken and undermine the CDC's ability to promote Americans' health, prepare for disease outbreaks, and develop public trust through transparency.

Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (I-VT) echoed Monarez's beliefs that she was fired for her commitment to ethical scientific practices and public service. Ranking Member Sanders reaffirmed his discontent with Secretary Kennedy's beliefs on vaccinations and unsuitability for his post. Both Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Ranking Member Sanders expressed concern for Americans' health and the country's pandemic preparedness. In his remarks, Subcommittee Chairman Cassidy reiterated his commitment to ensure government systems work for the American people, stressing the importance of CDC policies on the everyday health care decisions of trained health care professionals. He also expressed frustration with former Director Monarez's short tenure after she was the first CDC Director to be [confirmed](#) by the Senate. Chairman Cassidy stated he is exercising the committee's oversight capabilities to ensure the accusations are taken seriously and that President Trump has the strongest CDC. He noted that Secretary Kennedy and other HHS officials will be called to testify at a future date to respond to Dr. Monarez and Dr. Houry's statements.

What's on Tap

House Republicans advanced a short-term continuing resolution (CR) last week by a vote of 217-212, before returning to their home districts for a recess this week. Senate Democrats were [quick to reject](#) the funding measure, which notably lacked an extension of the Affordable Care Act's enhanced premium tax credits (APTCs). Although an extension of the APTCs were not included in the CR, House Republicans did include funding for community health centers,

implementation funding for the No Surprises Act, and temporary extensions of several health programs like the Hospital-at-Home program and Medicare telehealth flexibilities in their “clean” funding package.

The APTCs are set to expire at the end of the year, potentially raising the cost of premiums for millions of Americans. Democratic leadership has indicated that an extension of the APTCs is a non-negotiable to gain Democratic support of the CR, which Senate Republicans will need to bypass the 60-vote filibuster threshold. Democrats in the Senate [unsuccessfully passed](#) their version of a stopgap funding measure on Friday that would have kept the government funded through October 31st, permanently extended the APTCs, and repealed a variety of healthcare cuts included in the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*. Senators return from recess on the 29th, providing the upper chamber only two full working days before the expiration of government funding on October 1st.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) [met late last week](#) following Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kennedy’s [major restructuring](#) of the panel this summer, resulting in all former advisors being replaced with Kennedy’s appointees. ACIP voted to not recommend the combined measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (MMRV) vaccine for any patient under 4 years old, reversing longstanding guidance on the vaccine. The panel also moved to adopt a more restrictive recommendation for the COVID-19 vaccination, suggesting that the choice to take the vaccine should be based on individual decision making. Panelists ultimately tabled a vote on changes to the hepatitis B vaccine schedule after two days of discussion on whether to roll-back the 34-year policy of vaccinating newborns against hepatitis B at birth.

Upcoming Events

Senate

- Out of session

House:

- Out of session

Regular congressional activity is expected to resume following recess.