



Welcome to *Washington Update*, the weekly e-newsletter on the latest health care happenings in the nation's capital that affect APG's members.

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CDC Director Ousted And Top Agency Officials Quit Amid Latest Administration Efforts To Restrict Vaccine Access

The Trump administration's ongoing war on vaccines sparked the abrupt firing this week of Susan Monarez, MD, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the [resignations](#) of four other top CDC officials. According to multiple news accounts, Monarez was pressured to resign by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., after clashing repeatedly with him and other administration officials over increasingly controversial vaccine policies. The White House then announced her termination, which Monarez's attorneys have [challenged](#).

Monarez's firing followed the Food and Drug Administration's announcement this week that it had rescinded prior emergency use authorizations (EUA) for COVID-19 vaccines, approved new vaccines for the fall, and sharply narrowed the [indications](#) for use. The decision heightens the uncertainty about vaccine access for tens of millions of Americans who are not considered "[higher risk](#)," including otherwise healthy children under age five and healthy adults below age 65. But [news accounts](#) also suggest that multiple other controversial changes in vaccine policy are now in the offing – including likely [further restrictions](#) on COVID vaccines, along with changed recommendations on immunizing infants against measles, mumps and rubella, Hepatitis B, and RSV – and that Monarez and other CDC officials were resisting Kennedy's demands that they back the various vaccine changes.

Congressional concern: The resulting turmoil has sparked bipartisan pushback in Congress. Louisiana Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy, who chairs the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and cast a key vote to confirm Kennedy, [called](#) this week for postponing a hastily scheduled September meeting of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which Kennedy reconstituted and stacked with anti-vaccine members in June ([Washington Update - June 13, 2025](#)). "Serious allegations have been made about the meeting agenda, membership, and lack of scientific process being followed," Cassidy said in a statement. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), the HELP committee's ranking member, [called](#) for a bipartisan Senate investigation into Monarez's firing.

America's Physician Groups said in a [statement](#) it was "shocked and dismayed" by Monarez's ouster and the FDA's move, and reiterated its prior support for recommended vaccines as the "epitome of value-based care." APG's statement noted that AHIP, the group of health insurers, was also committed to making vaccine coverage decisions "informed by science." APG continues to consult with other medical and public health organizations about further actions to preserve access to vaccines and other essential evidence-based preventive care and services.



Some ACA Coverage Restrictions Now On Pause As Litigation Over New Federal Rule Proceeds

Recently adopted regulatory measures that would curb enrollment in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplaces are now [on hold](#) after a Maryland federal court issued a temporary stay late last week. U.S. District Judge Brendan Hurson [paused](#) seven provisions in the [2025 Marketplace Integrity and Affordability Final Rule](#) just days before they

would take effect – ruling that the plaintiffs challenging the measures were likely to prevail in their lawsuit against HHS.

The plaintiffs – three city governments, a coalition of doctors, and an interest group representing small business owners –challenged the provisions in the rule that would impose a monthly surcharge of \$5 on marketplace enrollees to reconfirm their eligibility for coverage; require enrollees to pay past-due premiums before receiving new coverage; and add various requirements to verify enrollees' income, among others. The plaintiffs argued that the provisions were both unlawful and arbitrary and capricious, and that their effect would be to raise premiums, deter ACA enrollment, raise uninsurance rates, and lead to higher uncompensated care costs for "providers of last resort." CMS itself had estimated that the rule's overall provisions would cost 1.8 million people to lose health coverage.

Marketplace upheaval? Judge Hurson's ruling means that litigation in the case can now proceed without the seven specific changes in the regulation taking effect for now. A [separate challenge](#) to these and other aspects of the final rule from 20 Democratic state attorneys general and Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro is also pending in a Massachusetts federal court. The lawsuits will now unfold against the backdrop of broader policy changes that threaten ACA marketplace stability, including provisions of the 2025 reconciliation law ([H.R. 1](#)) that would further restrict coverage, and the scheduled expiration of [enhanced premium tax credits](#) at the end of this year. Separately, health insurers participating in the ACA marketplaces are reportedly seeking [average premium increases of 18 percent](#) for 2026, citing the increasing cost and utilization of high-priced drugs, higher health care labor costs, and inflation.



Physician-Led Accountable Care Organizations In Medicare Shared Savings Program Produced Big Savings And Quality Improvement In 2024 Performance Year

Members of America's Physician Groups (APG) are among the accountable care organizations (ACOs) that continue to produce top quality results and financial savings in the Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP), based on 2024 [results](#) released this week by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). For Performance Year (PY) 2024, the 476 ACOs now in MSSP achieved the highest savings since the program's inception, earning shared savings payments totaling \$4.1 billion, and producing \$2.4 billion in net savings for Medicare relative to spending benchmarks.

In addition to financial savings, nearly all ACOs continued to meet and exceed quality standards. Multiple quality measures showed that ACOs demonstrated improvements in beneficiaries with adequately controlled high blood pressure, declines in poor hemoglobin A1c control, and increases in screenings and follow-ups for depression among Medicare enrollees.

“APG is proud of our 27 member organizations, which collectively operate 40 MSSP ACOs, for achieving these important performance incentives and net savings for the nation’s taxpayers,” [said](#) Susan Dentzer, APG’s President and Chief Executive Officer. She noted that physician-led ACOs continued to outperform so-called “high revenue” ACOs that are typically hospital-led, and that ACOs composed predominantly of primary care clinicians performed better compared to those with fewer primary care clinicians. “Our ACO members typically channel their shared savings back into building their capacities and infrastructure to achieve accountable care, thus keeping the ‘flywheel’ of performance improvement in traditional Medicare going,” Dentzer said.



In Case You Missed It

- The Trump administration can move forward with canceling \$783 million in grants to the National Institutes for Health for including a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the Supreme Court said in an August 21 [ruling](#).
- HHS is [ending](#) its recognition of unions representing thousands of HHS employees and moving to strip them of their collective bargaining rights.
- Dan Brillman, co-founder and CEO of health technology company [Unite Us](#), will [reportedly soon be announced](#) as director of CMS’s Centers for Medicaid and CHIP Services (CMCS), succeeding Drew Snyder, who [departed](#) in June.
- HHS Secretary Kennedy [named](#) Matt Buckham, a Heritage Foundation alumnus and creator of a [watchlist](#) tracking federal career staff allegedly “driving radical Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives” as his Chief of Staff.
- Newly published performance [results](#) for the CMS Innovation Center’s [Enhancing Oncology Model \(EOM\)](#) showed that more than three quarters of participants achieved cost savings. More than half were also rewarded for meeting quality of care measures, such as avoiding unnecessary emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

- A forthcoming House Energy and Commerce committee [hearing](#) will examine how artificial intelligence (AI) can improve patient care, strengthen provider-patient relationships, and accelerate FDA reviews and clinical trials; the hearing will be held at 10:15am ET on Wednesday, September 3.



APG Announcements And Offerings

- Registration is now open for the **APG Fall Conference 2025 - Purpose, Perseverance and Possibility: Staying the Course on Accountable Care, November 5-7 in National Harbor, MD**, near Washington, DC. **Register by Friday**, September 26, to save up to \$200 with our Early Bird registration.
- APG will host two upcoming sponsored webinars:
 - "Rewriting the Dementia Playbook: A Value-Based Blueprint for Brain Health," presented by Linus Health, on Thursday, October 2, at 3:00pm ET. [Register here](#).
 - "Bridging the Gap: Integrating Behavioral Health Into Evernorth Primary Care," Presented by evolvedMO, on Tuesday October 14, at 4:00pm ET. [Register here](#).
- APG has partnered with **Champions for Vaccine Education, Equity and Progress (CVEEP)** to provide APG members with consumer-facing materials to assist with vaccine outreach and education in patient communications during the upcoming respiratory virus season. Please access tailored materials for APG members [here](#).
- Want to get more involved in APG's Federal advocacy efforts? [Join APG Advocates today](#).