



The First 100 Days

Welcome back to our biweekly member update on the first 100 days of the 119th Congress and Trump-Vance administration.

Note: This bi-weekly message supplements Capitol Connector (CapCon), our weekly federal policy and regulatory newsletter update. If you're not already signed up to receive CapCon, we highly recommend [you do so here!](#)

Additionally, you can take action when it matters most by [signing up for our Advocacy Alerts](#) through our advocacy platform. It's an easy way to receive timely updates on advocacy opportunities and make your voice heard loud and clear.

Budget Resolutions & Next Steps

- **President Trump emphasizes support for House budget plan:** On 2/19, President Trump announced on Truth Social that he prefers the House budget framework (one comprehensive reconciliation bill) as opposed to the Senate's plan to break the administration's legislative priorities into two reconciliation bills. President Trump's support for the House package comes after saying during an interview Tuesday night that "Medicaid, Medicare – none of that stuff is going to be touched" aside from efforts to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse.

- **Rewind one day:** The Senate had moved ahead and scheduled procedural votes and deliberations on their budget framework this week, with the goal of passing a bill focused on the border, energy, and defense, and then later this year turning their attention to a bill focused on tax cuts that would likely include any proposed Medicaid reforms. The Senate was pacing ahead of the House on their budget framework, hoping to make the House consider their version as opposed to the other way around.
- **What's the difference between the House and Senate budget frameworks?** The biggest difference, and of most concern to National Council and our members, is that the House budget framework directs the Energy and Commerce Committee to decrease spending by \$880 billion over ten years, which is significantly higher than instructions to reduce funding in the Senate version. This likely means that Medicaid will be looked at for a significant portion of those cuts.
- **Next Steps:** The Senate is expected to carry on and consider their framework with deliberations this week to consider amendments. It is unclear if Senate GOP leadership will alter their plans at all in reaction to President Trump's endorsement of the House framework. Meanwhile, the House could bring their framework to the floor for consideration as early as next week, with potential renewed enthusiasm from lawmakers given President Trump's public support. Once each chamber passes their respective budget resolutions, committees within the House and Senate will begin drafting bill text according to the instructions provided in the resolutions.

GOP Pushback to Proposed Medicaid Cuts

- **Some Republican lawmakers signal hesitancy around Medicaid cuts:** A few House Republicans have either publicly or privately expressed concerns about proposed Medicaid cuts, illustrating the

potential political difficulty of voting to reduce access to health care. Among [several examples](#), one includes : Rep. Rob Bresnahan (PA-08), who [released a statement](#) saying “If a bill is put in front of me that guts the benefits my neighbors rely on, I will not vote for it.” Notably, there are more than 200,000 people covered by Medicaid in his district.

- Again, in a Fox News interview, President Trump reiterated his position on Medicaid saying, ““Medicare, Medicaid — none of that stuff is going to be touched,” outside of eliminating waste, fraud and abuse. This creates an interesting dynamic given the proposed instructions to the Energy and Commerce committee in the House Budget Resolution that would likely require significant cuts to the Medicaid program.
- **Why this matters:** Because of the GOP’s slim House majority, multiple lawmakers publicly expressing concern about Medicaid cuts is a positive. National Council and other leading organizations in our space have been sustaining a coalition-based education and awareness campaign around the importance of access to mental health and substance use care through Medicaid. [See a recent joint statement here](#).

New Executive Order Establishing MAHA Commission

- **MAHA Commission:** On Thursday, Feb. 13, the Trump-Vance administration published an [executive order](#) formally establishing the “Make America Healthy Again” (MAHA) Commission. The EO provides that the initial mission of the commission is to address childhood chronic disease and instructs the commission to deliver a report within 100 days of the order that focuses on children’s health, including a direction to “assess the prevalence of and threat posed by the prescription of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, antipsychotics, mood stabilizers, stimulants, and weight-loss drugs.” There were several callouts to mental health, though not of

substance use. National Council will continue to monitor this commission's formation and action steps.

Agency and Regulatory Updates:

- **RFK Jr. Confirmed:** The Senate voted last week to confirm RFK Jr. as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). In his [first remarks to HHS staff](#), RFK Jr. asked for a “clean slate” and reemphasized his desire to challenge widely accepted norms around medicine and science, with a focus on chronic disease. [Watch his full remarks here](#).
- **HHS Layoffs:** [Thousands of HHS workers](#) were fired within the past week, including staff at the Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Indian Health Service, Administration for Children and Families, and more. According to the Trump-Vance administration, staff labeled as “probationary” are the main focus of layoffs, not just at HHS but across most government agencies. Probationary employees are newer to the agencies, or people promoted to different positions and in a “probationary” period for an average of 1-2 years.
- **DEA Nomination:** Terry Cole, current Virginia Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security was nominated to lead the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). He previously worked for the DEA for 22 years.
- **HRSA Administrator Sworn in:** Tom Engels sworn in to lead the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) returning to the post he had from 2019-2021. HRSA oversees FQHCs and the federal office of rural health policy, among many health workforce-related initiatives.
- **Delayed Effective Date of New Telemedicine Final Rules:** In accordance with the Presidential memorandum, “Regulatory Freeze Pending Review,” DEA and HHS [delayed the effective date](#) from Feb. 18 to March 21. of two final rules related to the practice of telemedicine, titled “Expansion of Buprenorphine Treatment via

Telemedicine Encounter” and “Continuity of Care via Telemedicine for Veterans Affairs Patients.” The administration specified that its pushback will not impede telemedicine prescribing in the interim, as those covered under the two rules are still permitted to do so under temporary COVID-19 telehealth flexibilities that run through the end of this year. Public comments on this delay are open through Feb 28.

Appropriations Processes Underway

- **FY25 funding deadline nears:** Bipartisan negotiators are working to secure a federal funding deal ahead of the March 14 government shutdown deadline. Actions related to the funding freeze have added complications to the negotiations process.
- **FY26 appropriations request forms open:** Simultaneously, FY26 appropriations processes are beginning with some lawmaker offices beginning to post programmatic appropriations request forms for FY26 appropriations bills.

Protecting Access to Care through Medicaid: Fill out Survey, Contact Lawmakers

- **Survey:** To continue being proactive in today’s dynamic and fluid environment, we want to get an up-to-date sense of our members’ revenue percentage from Medicaid, number of people they employ, and the impacts specific proposed cuts would have on communities and organizations. While we are still waiting to see official legislation from lawmakers that would cut or otherwise reform Medicaid funding, we must continue to educate and raise awareness with lawmakers. To that end, please take a few minutes to fill out the below survey:
 - [Survey link here](#)
- **Write to Congress:** So far, nearly **3,000** letters have been sent from **950** people in **45** states... let’s keep the momentum going!

- [Use this link](#) to customize and send a letter to your elected officials.
 - **You can customize your message via the two open text boxes** by sharing more about who you are, and what impact Medicaid has had on you, your community, or your ability to improve access to care. Sharing your story moves and impacts lawmakers. In doing so, staying focused on the ask, sharing a concise anecdote, and using respectful language goes a long way in your story's efficacy.
 - **You can maximize your action and share the link** with your coworkers, family and friends! Lawmakers need to hear from their constituents that proposals to significantly cut Medicaid should be considered non-starters in any legislative negotiations.
- **Want to call your lawmaker's office too?** Take two minutes and place a call to the D.C. office of your members of Congress. Want some pointers on what to say? [Check out a template call script here](#). Feel free to make it your own! [You can find your officials' contact information here](#) after typing in your name and address.
- Questions on this? [Don't hesitate to ask us](#).

Key Dates

- **March 14:** Government funding will again face a funding deadline as per the continuing resolution passed at the end of 2024.
- **March 31:** Medicare telehealth flexibilities will expire unless Congress passes another extension.

If you have any questions or feedback on the contents of The First 100 Days, [contact our policy team](#).

In the meantime, [sign up](#) for the National Council's advocacy platform today and stay up to date on opportunities to make your voice heard.

We'll see you back here for **the next edition** in our series the **Week of March 3**.

Sincerely,
National Council Policy and Advocacy Team

NATIONAL COUNCIL
for **Mental Wellbeing**



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