



Key Members of Congress Expected to Assume Leadership Roles in the 118th Congress

Background and Key Health Priorities

Updated Nov 18, 2022

Republican House Leadership

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy won the Republicans' designation for House speaker and will move forward to a House vote in January 2023.

Rep. McCarthy has stated that "American families should be able to make their own decisions regarding their health care," claiming that policies should encourage decisions made by patients and doctors. He created the Healthy Future Task Force, which is meant to develop solutions to modernize the American health care system to lower costs, keep Americans healthy, develop better therapies and cures, and provide Americans with more choices.

Likely Speaker McCarthy's policy priorities are outlined in standalone Healthy Futures Task Force [summary](#)

Democratic House Leadership Candidates

Speaker Nancy Pelosi has announced that she will step away from the leadership ranks of the House Democrats. Her top deputies Majority Leader Hoyer Whip Clyburn have indicated they will also step aside for a new generation of leadership. Representatives Hakeem Jeffries, Katherine Clark, and Pete Aguilar are expected to win the top three Democratic slots in the House. House Democrats are scheduled to meet on Nov. 30 to elect their leaders for the next Congress.

Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY)

Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) formally announced his bid to replace Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) on November 18, 2022.

Rep. Jeffries currently has the support of Rep. Steny H. Hoyer and the Congressional Black Caucus, whose members have publicly championed him for the leadership role.

He represents the diverse Eighth Congressional District of New York, an area that encompasses large parts of Brooklyn and a section of Queens and has the highest number of public housing residents of any district. Rep. Jeffries was among the impeachment managers making the case to convict former President Trump on charges of obstructing Congress and abusing the power of his office. He has served as chairman of the House Democratic Caucus. In Congress, he has introduced, co-sponsored, and has been involved in the passage of legislation advocating for social and economic justice.

Previously, he practiced law in New York, clerked for the Honorable Harold Baer Jr. of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, and served in the New York State Assembly

Rep. Jeffries' Health Priorities

Rep. Jeffries has previously supported strengthening the Affordable Care Act and lowering prescription drug costs through biosimilars and generics. He signed onto the bill for Medicare for All in 2019, despite



expressing support for other, more moderate approaches. He is expected to support maintenance of the Medicare drug provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act, access to affordable housing as a social determinant of health, and strengthening the ACA. Rep. Jeffries has recently been focused on prescription drug cost reform, obesity prevention policy, and protecting safety net hospitals.

- Obesity –
 - Has introduced H.R.5625 - Halt Obesity in America Act that would expand eligibility for an obesity-reduction grant program managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for land-grant universities in states with eligible counties
- Drugs/Biosimilars –
 - Has introduced H.R.2883 - Stop Stalling Access to Affordable Medications directing the FTC to deter filing of sham citizen petitions to cover an attempt to interfere with approval of a competing generic drug or biosimilar, to foster competition and facilitate the efficient review of petitions filed in good faith to raise legitimate public health concerns, and for other purposes.
- Reproductive rights –
 - Co-sponsored H.R.8373 - Right to Contraception Act to statutorily protect an individual's right to access and a health care provider's right to provide contraception and related information.

Rep. Katherine Clark (D-MA)

Rep. Clark announced her run for minority whip on November 18, 2022.

Rep. Katherine Clark serves the Fifth District of Massachusetts. She was first elected in a special election in December of 2013. She is known for her work on the House Appropriations Committee and her alignment with the Congressional Progressive Caucus. She is an advocate for ending wage discrimination, protecting women's health care, access to affordable high-quality childcare, paid family leave, and safer schools.

Previously she has served as a state senator, state representative, general counsel for the Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services, and policy chief for the state attorney general.

Rep. Clark's Health Priorities

Rep. Clark has been a vocal supporter of the ACA and a cosponsor of the Medicare for All Act. Her previous health care priorities have included policies related to women and children through her introduction of bills such as the Accelerating Kids' Access to Care Act and the Birth Access Benefiting Improved Essential Facility Services Act. She is expected to continue her advocacy for these groups, as well as the mental health access.

- Children's Health Care Access –
 - Has introduced H.R.3089 - Accelerating Kids' Access to Care Act to require state Medicaid programs to establish a process through which qualifying out-of-state providers may enroll as participating providers without undergoing additional screening requirements.



- Children's Mental Health –
 - Has introduced H.R.6214 - Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Act, to award grants to increase access to school-based, mental-health-services providers at high-need public elementary and secondary schools.
- Maternal Health-
 - Has introduced H.R.3337 - BABIES Act to establish a Medicaid demonstration program to improve freestanding birth center services for women with low-risk pregnancies.

Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-CA)

Rep. Aguilar announced his run for caucus chair on November 18, 2022.

Rep. Aguila represents the 31st congressional district of California. Rep. Aguilar currently serves on the House committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. Rep. Aguilar is an advocate for legislation to create jobs, support students, and safeguard programs for seniors and veterans.

Previously, he was appointed to the Inland Empire Regional Office of the Governor as the Deputy Director by California Governor Gray Davis where eventually he became the Interim Director and served as the mayor of the Redlands.

Rep. Aguilar is a supporter of high-quality, affordable health care. He has been a strong voice against the efforts to repeal the ACA. He has previously voted for H.R.7780 -- the Mental Health Matters Act and the bipartisan H.R.3967 Honoring Our PACT Act to expand veterans' health care. He will continue to be an advocate for those with pre-existing conditions, lowering health care costs, and mental health access.

Rep. Aguilar's Health Priorities

- Mental Health –
 - Has cosponsored H.R.2529 - Mental Health for Latinos Act of 2021 to develop and implement an outreach and education strategy regarding behavioral health issues among the Hispanic and Latino populations.
 - Has cosponsored H.R.1331 - Strengthening Mental Health Supports for BIPOC Communities Act to require states and other jurisdictions that receive certain block grants for community mental health services and substance abuse prevention and treatment to report on services and outreach provided through those grants to members of racial and ethnic minority groups.
 - Has cosponsored H.R.5414 - Ensuring Medicaid Continuity for Children in Foster Care Act of 2021 to allow states to receive federal Medicaid payment for services provided to foster care children in qualified residential treatment programs (i.e., programs with trauma-informed treatment models that address the needs of children with serious emotional or behavioral disorders or disturbances).
- Pediatric Health –
 - Has cosponsored H.R.5131 - Pediatric Access to Critical Healthcare Act to award grants to children's hospitals and other providers that predominately treat individuals under 21 for improving pediatric health care infrastructure.



Senate HELP Committee

Chairman Patty Murray (D-WA) has announced her intention to seek the Chairmanship of the Senate Appropriations Committee, leaving the Senate HELP Committee to Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-VT). Similarly, the Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) has indicated he will instead move to the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee leaving Senator Bill Cassidy as the Ranking Republican Member on the Senate HELP Committee.

While Sen. Sanders has been an outspoken advocate of liberal health policies, it is currently unclear how much bipartisan dealmaking he will achieve as HELP Committee Chair. Senator Cassidy, a gastroenterologist, is a well-known voice in health policy. We are hopeful that Sanders-Cassidy will be a productive and bipartisan pairing.

Senator Sanders' Health Priorities

Sanders' office has confirmed that he intends to seek the chairmanship of the health committee. He has announced that he intends to focus on **"universal health care, lowering the cost of prescription drugs, increasing access to higher education, and protecting workers' rights on the job."**

- Sen. Sanders has been a strong advocate for a Medicare-for-all system. And although these issues primarily fall within the Senate Finance Committee's jurisdiction, Sen. Sanders is expected to be a strong voice for universal coverage. Sanders has also been an aggressive advocate for eliminating medical debt.
- Sanders will continue to work on lower drug pricing. Previously within the HELP Committee, Sen. Sanders has attempted to pursue legislation to authorize drug importation from other countries – including pursuing amendment to allow importation as recently as June of this year.
- Sanders has pushed for more pandemic funding throughout the coronavirus crisis, co-sponsoring the American Rescue Plan, which allocated an additional \$500 million to FDA to facilitate the development of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to combat COVID-19.

Senator Cassidy's Health Priorities

Senator Cassidy has indicated that he plans to take over as the ranking member on the HELP Committee. He has a long and significant health policy history prior to coming into this role – that we only provide highlights to here. It has been recently announced that his former staffer Amanda Lincoln, who helped with the negotiation of the infrastructure law last year, will return to be minority staff director for the Committee.

He recently indicated to the press that his priorities for HELP **include drug pricing, oversight of the implementation of the surprise medical billing law he helped design and raising dyslexia as a policy priority.** Other work includes -

- Senator Cassidy has also expressed interest in oversight of HHS's actions – specifically and how it operates and spent pandemic dollars.
- He would work to continue the HELP committee's work on mental health and telehealth issues. He has led on the Mental Health Reform Reauthorization Act of 2022 (S.4170) and could return to any parts of that are not passed into law in 2022.



- Senator Cassidy has been vocally engaged in cybersecurity and data privacy issues in health care and we expect this would continue in his new role.
- He has focused on antibiotic issues -- In April 2021, he and Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN) introduced their Onshoring Essential Antibiotics Act (S. 1176), which would establish a program to build and improve U.S. facilities that can manufacture generic antibiotics that are vulnerable to supply chain disruptions.

Forthcoming

There may be other new health policy leaders on committees – such as the House Ways and Means Leadership and Appropriations Subcommittee Leadership. We will update as other individuals newly gaining higher-profile leadership roles emerge.