

Special Needs Alliance:

Public Policy News You Can Use



September 2, 2025

Chicago Public Schools Board Member Calls for the Reframing of Services for Students with Disabilities Amid Budget Deficit Discussions

On Tuesday August 26th, Chicago Public Schools Board Member Angel Gutierrez [penned](#) an letter to the editor on the city's discussion of children with special needs. In the letter, she reaffirmed her commitment to protect every student across the city, including ensuring students can access a high-quality public education. She remarked that these rights have been framed as a financial burden during recent meetings on the fiscal year 2026 budget. She acknowledged that "diverse learner services are, factually, a rising cost for the district" yet noted the services are not a budget line item that can be cut. She called for community members to reframe the services not as *extras* but rather as services Chicago Public Schools offers to all students.

Former NHS Health Secretary Calls for the Overhaul of Special Education in England

On Wednesday August 27th, Former English Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt [claimed](#) in a center-right think tank report that children and young people are being overdiagnosed with mental health conditions and losing sight of the reality that child development is "messy and uneven". He further claimed that mental illnesses and neurodiversity account for more than half of the post-pandemic increase in claimants of disability benefits, rapidly increasing risks to the financial sustainability of local government, in part due to considerations in the English Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (Send) System. However, parents are concerned that education, health and care plans (EHCPs) will be targeted, harming special needs students in English schools. England is expected to publish a white paper later this year on plans to reform the Send system. Former Health Secretary Hunt's position mirrors United States Department of Health and Human Services Director Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s claims of

childhood overdiagnosis and medication overprescribing which is reflected in the recently [leaked](#) Make our Children Healthy Again Strategy.

FDA Narrows COVID-19 Vaccine Access, Revokes Emergency Use Authorizations

On August 27, 2025, the FDA [revoked](#) the emergency use authorizations (EUAs) for COVID-19 vaccines and issued new approvals limiting who can receive them. Vaccines are now authorized only for patients with conditions that put them at higher risk for severe illness. The changes also end Pfizer's vaccine authorization for children under 5. Moderna's vaccine will be available to at-risk patients ages 6 months and older, Pfizer's for those 5 and older, and Novavax's for those 12 and older. Updated vaccines will target variants in the JN.1 lineage.

The move raises questions about access for healthy patients, insurance coverage, pharmacist administration, and vaccine injury compensation protections. Medical and public health leaders, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), warn the restrictions may leave children, pregnant women, and otherwise healthy people without access.

Experts also caution the policy could exacerbate vaccine hesitancy and create new barriers for parents seeking to vaccinate their children. Critics note FDA's advisory committee, Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, was not consulted, and some warn the changes could undermine broader immunization efforts. Secretary Kennedy framed the action as fulfilling campaign promises to end vaccine mandates, rescind EUAs, and ensure vaccines remain available for the vulnerable.

CDC Leadership Changes Continue: Director Defies Removal and Top Officials Resign

Intensity inside the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to amplify as Director Susan Monarez refused to leave her post. On Thursday, August 27, The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [posted](#) on the social media platform "X" that Director Monarez was no longer director of the CDC. Monarez's attorneys state that only the President himself can remove a presidentially appointed, Senate confirmed director and argue that she remains CDC director.

At the same time, four other top CDC officials have resigned from their roles. National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases Director Demetre C Daskalakis, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases Director Daniel Jernigan, CDC Chief Medical

Officer Debra Houry, and Office of Public Health Data, Surveillance and Technology Director Jen Layden have all submitted their letters of resignation. In his [resignation email](#), former Director Daskalakis stated that “I am not able to serve in this role any longer because of the ongoing weaponizing of public health.” The slew of resignations come after Secretary Kennedy made sweeping changes to vaccination schedules in the United States. Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA), chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension (HELP) committee and a key vote in Secretary Kennedy’s confirmation, has stated that departures of this magnitude [require senate oversight](#).

Federal Judge Allows Medicaid Reimbursement Ban for Abortion Providers to Stand

On August 25th, U.S. Federal District Judge Lance Walker, a Trump appointee, [denied](#) The Family Planning Association of Maine’s [preliminary and permanent injunction](#) on a provision in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) preventing providers from receiving Medicaid reimbursements for a year if they provide abortion care. Family Planning Association of Maine is the state’s largest network of reproductive health services providers and claimed the OBBBA provision violates the Equal Protection Clause. Judge Walker [denied](#) the injunction on the basis that Congress has authority over federal funds.

Last month, U.S. Federal District Judge Indira Talwani, an Obama appointee, [granted a Temporary Restraining Order](#) (TRO) in [Planned Parenthood Federation of America v. Department of Health and Human Services](#). Planned Parenthood argued that the same provision of the OBBBA was a targeted attack on the only national abortion providers that violated the Equal Protection Clause and the First Amendment.

While Medicaid generally does not cover or pay for abortions, supporters of the ban argue that Medicaid reimbursements for other services indirectly support the clinics, allowing them to provide abortion care. However, Planned Parenthood argued the OBBBA provision would disrupt vital health care services including contraception, cancer screenings, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections to over 1 million Medicaid patients. If the provision is allowed to stand, clinics providing abortions may be forced to turn away Medicaid patients or close due to the loss of reimbursement.

Community Health Center Advocates Align with MAHA Agenda Amid Push for Funding Increase

According to InsideHealthPolicy, community health center (CHC) advocates are [seeking](#) a \$3.6 billion increase in annual funding – something stakeholders hope to achieve by aligning

lobbying efforts with the Trump Administration's Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) agenda. Advocates are reportedly making the case that increased funding to CHCs would support this administration's efforts to combat chronic disease. More specifically, CHC advocates are planning to leverage recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) findings around the increase in the number of uninsured individuals as a byproduct of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). Since federally funded CHCs are required by law to provide care regardless of a patient's insurance status, stakeholders aim to position themselves as the solution to mitigating chronic disease in a population with less access to preventive care.

CHC funding is tied to federal appropriations set to expire on September 30th. Advocates therefore have less than a month to rally support from Congress. While lawmakers are expected to pass another short-term continuing resolution, as they did in March, partisan tensions could still result in a funding lapse if no bipartisan agreement is reached.

What's on Tap

Members of Congress [return](#) to Capitol Hill this week after a month-long recess and are now barreling towards a looming September 30th deadline to keep the government funded or face a shutdown. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have already indicated that the likelihood of a shutdown at the end of this month is much higher than it was in March, when several Democrats opted to vote with Republicans on a continuing resolution to keep the government funded. Democratic leadership has already requested a meeting with GOP leadership to discuss the struggles of rural hospitals and the potential impact of ACA tax credits expiring at the end of this year.

The Trump Administration [further complicated](#) matters late last week when the Office of Management and Budget Director (OMB) Russell Vought announced the unilateral cancellation of \$4.9 billion in foreign aid by using a pocket veto – aid that was already congressionally approved and allocated. Democrats have reportedly been further dissuaded from engaging in bipartisan funding negotiations by President Trump's firing of Federal Reserve board member Lisa Cook and the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) decision to revoke the emergency use of COVID-19 vaccines.

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kennedy added to the divide between the Administration and Capitol Hill when he dismissed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Susan Monarez last week – who was confirmed by Congress at the end of July. Although Jim O'Neill – who previously served as HHS Secretary Kennedy's deputy – has been [named](#) acting director of the CDC. Inserting O'Neill as director followed days of turmoil when Susan Monarez argued that her dismissal must come from the President, who is yet to

comment on the matter. Three high-ranking officials at the CDC [resigned](#) from their positions following the Trump Administration's efforts to remove Monarez.

Upcoming Events

Senate:

- In session: September 2 – 5
- Thursday, September 4, 10:00am | [Senate Finance Committee holds a Full Committee Hearing on the President's 2026 Health Care agenda](#) | 215 Dirksen Senate Office Building

House:

- In session: September 2 – 4
- Tuesday, September 2, 5:00pm | [House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education holds a Markup on FY26 Spending Bill](#) | H-140 Capitol