



April 23, 2026

Senate Health Committees Hold Hearings on the FY 2027 HHS Budget

Overview:

On April 3, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) unveiled its [Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2027 budget request](#). It proposes \$111.1 billion in discretionary budget authority for FY 2027, marking a 12.5% decrease from enacted levels for FY 2026. Funding requests for specific health agencies include a \$3.7 billion reduction for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a \$437 million reduction for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), a \$484 million reduction for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and a \$48 million cut for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), offset by an expected \$232 million dollar increase in User Fees. The budget request retains several policy proposals to advance the Make America Healthy Again agenda, including new research on chronic disease and prevention, oversight of health care fraud, waste, and abuse, additional support for behavioral health services, and food safety initiatives. Departmental restructuring also continues as a central priority for HHS, with the budget request proposing several changes. This includes the creation of a new Administration for a Healthy America, consolidation of overlapping functions and programs, and transfer of the 340B Drug Pricing Program from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to CMS.

On April 23, the Senate Committee on Finance and Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) held hearings with HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to discuss aspects of the budget request. Of note, Secretary Kennedy took a markedly different tone from previous hearings when asked for his thoughts on vaccinations. Specifically, Secretary Kennedy stated that HHS is taking steps to make federal vaccination recommendations clear and trustworthy, while also promoting the measles vaccine for all Americans. Secretary Kennedy also responded to questions regarding the ongoing resurgence of measles in the United States by pointing to the presence of outbreaks in other developed countries, as well as the increase in cases that began before his tenure at HHS. When asked about financial pressures for state Medicaid programs as a result of reduced funding under H.R. 1, Secretary Kennedy contended that Medicaid funding was not cut and would increase over the next decade based on [findings from the Congressional Budget Office \(CBO\)](#). While programmatic spending is expected to increase in conjunction with rising health care costs nationwide, the H.R. 1 reconciliation package [reduced overall federal spending on Medicaid by roughly \\$900 billion](#), amounting to a substantial funding cut that increases financial pressure on state and local governments. Pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) reform received brief attention during the Senate Finance hearing, with Senator James Lankford (R-OK) requesting support for new legislation, the Ensuring Access to Low Cost Medicines for Seniors Act ([H.R. 8143](#)) that would mandate Medicare Part D coverage of generic and biosimilar therapies in a generic/biosimilar-only tier.

Witnesses:

- Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Secretary, United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Senate Finance Committee Leadership:

- Committee Chair – Mike Crapo (R-ID)
- Committee Ranking Member – Ron Wyden (D-OR)

Senate Finance Committee Leadership:

- Committee Chair – Bill Cassidy (R-LA)
- Committee Ranking Member - Bernie Sanders (I-VT)

Question & Answer Highlights – Finance Committee:

Chair Crapo – You identified nutrition as a bedrock of health and a primary lever for combatting chronic disease. You also secured commitments from 50 medical schools to add nutrition to their curriculums. How does HHS plan to build on this progress?

Sec. Kennedy – We’re expanding the number of medical schools. We’re also working with half the states, including those who’ve already passed legislation on nutritional medical education. We’ve issued notice to hospitals that they must begin serving nutritious food. We’re driving good through SNAP, school lunches, and other federal support programs.

Chair Crapo – Republicans established the Rural Health Transformation Program to strengthen and modernize our rural health care system. We’re hoping that states will implement comprehensive strategies that expand health services while creating new access points to bring care closer to home. What are some of the most innovative ways that states will work to transform their rural care?

Sec. Kennedy – Applications from the states were extraordinary. The most common applications were to maximize the use of AI in diagnostics, health delivery, and administration. A lot of the money is also spent on telehealth in places where health care is not accessible. Many applications were for residency programs and worker recruitment. A lot was also for badly needed infrastructure repairs. The loss of a hospital is also often the loss of the largest employer or economic driver in a community. This program increased the infusion of federal dollars to rural areas by 50%.

Ranking Member Wyden – It looks like the President is working hard to muzzle you on the issue of vaccines. Why would you do something that’s so awful for kids on the vaccine issue?

Sec. Kennedy – Under my leadership, we handled the measles outbreak better than any country in the world. Mexico has 3x as much measles and a quarter of our population. We had 1,700 cases this year while Europe had 33,000 this year. Many populations don’t want to vaccinate. It has nothing to do with me. We’ve limited our outbreak because I speak with governors, we send the epidemic intelligence service, and we provide the help they need. The vaccination levels stopped during COVID because the public lost trust in government, which I’m trying to restore.

Ranking Member Wyden – These secret deals with pharmaceutical companies allowed for perks for big pharma, including exemptions for products from tariffs. We’re demanding that you disclose the

details of these deals. Yesterday, you indicated that you'd give out "some information," but not the real information. Yes or no, will you commit to releasing the written agreements with pharmaceutical companies tomorrow?

Sec. Kennedy – No I will not. Those agreements contain proprietary information and trade secrets. When you passed the Inflation Reduction Act, you put in a provision requiring NDAs for Medicare price negotiation. Nobody will come to the table if I release proprietary information. We've dropped IVF by 83%, GLPs by 89%, and are now paying the lowest cost in the world. We did it because you wouldn't act.

Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) – Thank you for everything that you and HHS have done helping South Carolina with our measles outbreak. I'm hopeful that we can declare the outbreak over on April 26. It's hard to find a silver lining, but we know that early detection matters a lot. Last month, I introduced the Predict Act to strengthen wastewater surveillance. CDC helped sequence positive wastewater samples in South Carolina at the onset of the outbreak. By utilizing these tools, we can see outbreaks days before hospital admissions begin to rise. Can you commit to working with me on wastewater surveillance?

Sec. Kennedy – Absolutely Senator. It's something that's very personally important to me. We're also putting \$325 million in this budget towards a new biothreat radar system to detect pathogens as soon as they emerge.

Senator Mihcael Bennet (D-CO) – Last year, we saw the largest number of children die from the flu in modern American history.

Sec. Kennedy – That's one of the reasons why FDA approved two new vaccines for influenzas A and B last year.

Senator Bennet – Do you agree that 89% of the children who died were unvaccinated?

Sec. Kennedy – I don't know the exact number.

Senator Bennet – Do you regret removing information on vaccines and the flu from the HHS website?

Sec. Kennedy – We've spent billions on developing new vaccines. I think last year's version had 20% efficacy.

Senator Bennet – So you no longer believe the vaccine is ruining children's brains? You're here today talking about investments and approvals for vaccines.

Sec. Kennedy – We follow the science, Senator.

Senator Bennet – I hope you're following the science. That's how we eliminated measles 30 years ago.

Sec. Kennedy – Many nations have lost eradication status this year. It has nothing to do with vaccines, or outbreaks in Canada and Mexico.

Senator Bennet – I think the United States needs to be leading in these matters. That's why we're discouraged by your cuts to NIH and Medicaid.

Sec. Kennedy – There are no cuts to Medicaid, Senator. As you know. Look at the Congressional Budget Office this week. They say we're increasing the Medicaid budget by 37% over 10 years.

Senator Bennet – It is when it comes to cuts for rural hospitals, and those are real dollars. Do you realize that last year, the US had the highest number of measles cases in 30 years?

Sec. Kennedy – The whole world did. We had one of the highest vaccination rates on Earth.

Senator Bennet – Are you taking the position today that the measles vaccine is vital to keeping children safe? You haven't said that before.

Sec. Kennedy – That's my position. We promote the measles vaccine.

Senator James Lankford – I want to talk about pharmacy benefit managers. We recently passed legislation that delinks the pay for pharmacy benefit managers from the price of drugs. We also put any willing pharmacy, which is helping independent pharmacies being destroyed by PBMs. We want to work with your team on implementation, this has been a passion of ours for a while. Senator Hassan and I have legislation that takes another step, on the issue of tiering. When a generic or biosimilar is put out there, it needs to be put on a lower tier and not up on the more expensive brand tier. I ask for your team's help in getting this language right.

Sec. Kennedy – This is a bipartisan issue that's been a long time coming. The biggest impact is the delinking. These companies are supposed to be looking out for our interest but are profit motivated. Some PBMs, such as Cigna, have taken the lead in increasing transparency so the industry follows. But we need to ensure these actors are functioning in the system the way they're meant to.

Senator Lankford – I now want to talk about assisted suicide. California, Colorado, and Vermont are now being sued by disability rights groups for recently passed legislation on assisted suicide. What is HHS doing to protect those with disabilities who may be targeted by assisted suicide laws?

Sec. Kennedy – I think those laws are abhorrent. We see the effects in Canada, where people with disabilities are targeted. We can't be a moral authority if this becomes institutionalized.

Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) – While HHS hasn't promoted the measles vaccine, you've done a lot of your own self-promotion. You did a video working out with Kid Rock and drinking milk in a hot tub. Another official video shows you as a shirtless WWE fighter or video game hero. You've also posted photos of your face as the only leader fighting big pharma. Did President Trump know about this?

Sec. Kennedy - I didn't know about a number of those videos.

Senator Hassan – So the President didn't sign off on you using government funds for promotional videos?

Sec. Kennedy – I was asked about the cost of the Kid Rock video last week. My team said it cost \$0. I've never discussed it with the President.

Senator Hassan – Did the president approve your decision to fire all 17 ACIP members in June 2025?

Sec. Kennedy – Did I talk to him directly? I talked to the White House DPC.

Senator Hassan – Did the president approve that decision?

Sec. Kennedy – Yes. He did.

Senator Hassan – Did President Trump authorize you to change the ACIP charter two weeks ago?

Sec. Kennedy – DPC did. The Domestic Policy Council. It was elevated to the presidential level. We change the charter every few years.

Senator Catherine Cortez Masto – There are many concerns from oncologists in this country. Under your tenure, a drug for metastatic melanoma has not been approved. You said the FDA review panels found this drug ineffective, which isn't true. Based on your misinformation, are you prepared to change your position?

Sec. Kennedy – I had nothing to do with this decision. It comes out of FDA; we trust the process there. Every panel that voted on the drug unanimously voted against it. Why would I ever reject it? If the drug works, we're going to approve it.

Senator Cortez Masto – I appreciate your efforts to tackle fraud, waste, and abuse. Yet, this president pardoned two people convicted of health care fraud. Have you talked to the president about the fact he's undermining your efforts?

Sec. Kennedy – The president does not consult me about pardons.

Senator Cortez Masto – Boulder City Hospital in my state will need to transform into a rural emergency hospital due to H.R. 1 Medicaid provider tax cuts. What are you going to make sure our rural communities aren't left in a health care desert?

Sec. Kennedy – We're making the largest investment in rural health in history.

Senator Steve Daines (R-MT) – I appreciate your commitment to gold standard science and rural health. Could you touch on the impacts of the largest investment in rural health in history?

Sec. Kennedy – Future Medicaid cuts are not closing hospitals in her state. We've now increased the influx of federal dollars by \$10 billion per year. And we're not even cutting Medicaid. President Trump cares that these hospitals are closing.

Senator Daines – HHS is applying the principles of safety on its decisions regarding mifepristone. The evidence we have today points to real world consequences for women. Will you implement safeguards and reinstate the in-person dispensing requirement?

Sec. Kennedy – I've been advised by the Office of General Counsel to not talk about this due to ongoing litigation.

Senator Elisabeth Warren – The president claims TrumpRx have reduced drug prices by 600%. When looking at heartburn medication, a generic is available for \$16 at Costco. The brand drug is \$200 on TrumpRx.

Sec. Kennedy – President Trump has a different way of calculating these percentages. A \$600 drug reduced to \$10 is a 600% cut. You're comparing apples to oranges, the brand drug, to the generic.

Senator Warren – If you're buying a drug on TrumpRx, there's a ¼ chance you're paying a price hike. President Trump is also exempting big pharma companies with MFN deals from tariffs. Did you sign off on these sweetheart deals? Did you negotiate the deals? Will you make them available?

Sec. Kennedy – I did not personally. My team did. I'm happy to make the deals available except for trade secrets. You have the power to make this deal yourself. You have power to negotiate more than we do. Millions of people who are using TrumpRx disagree with you. We will be directing people to generics.

Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) – You've discussed the Indian Health Service. We'd like to see urban Indian health get the full FMAP. In the cuts to Headstart, some cities in my state may have to shut the whole program. Are you putting out funding RFPs?

Sec. Kennedy – I'm very committed to Headstart. We added millions in the budget for nutrition assistance.

Senator Cantwell – I want to discuss WISeR. AI is being used as a denial device for the CMS system. It's taking weeks to find out about denials.

Sec. Kennedy – That kind of delay is unacceptable. We only do 5% of prior authorizations through the WISeR model. The AI targets certain procedures gamed for fraud, like skin substitutes or back surgeries. It's supposed to have a human supervisor, too.

Senator John Barrasso – I'm focused on preventive care, as does the U.S. Preventive Service Task Force. Last week, you said USPSTF had been negligent for 20 years. You plan to bring on new members with a clear mission. How will you reform the task force?

Sec. Kennedy – The task force plays a great role in getting CMS compensation for important intervention. I know I have not done a good job in getting the meetings out there. We will change that. We're posting applications for new members. Several specialties are not well represented on the committee.

Senator Barrasso – I share concerns that task force decisions are being undermined by other interests. Is the current methodology still the gold standard?

Sec. Kennedy – I think there are some issues with the current methodology but yes.

Senator Barrasso – Are you taking steps now to ensure vaccine guidance is clear and trustworthy?

Sec. Kennedy – Yes, Senator.

Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) – We've expanded access to health savings accounts. Bronze plans are now eligible for HSAs. How do we tell folks in rural areas that this opportunity exists?

Sec. Kennedy – I'm not sure if an advertising campaign exists.

Senator Cassidy – Fraud often occurs in \$0 premium ACA plans, but your budget request has no funding to address this. Why is that?

Sec. Kennedy – The President’s Marketplace Integrity Rule eliminates \$0 premium plans. Many of the people on these plans didn’t know they were signed up due to broker fraud. 40% of the people on it never made a claim.

Senator Cassidy – What are we doing prospectively to address the threat of fraud?

Sec. Kennedy – We’re using AI across the department to identify fraud.

Senator Cassidy – We know Medicare will go insolvent too. Your department banned unlinked chart reviews, but the latest MA rate notice uses 2018 diagnoses and data, not 2023 diagnoses and 2024 expenditure data. Why would CMS not use the more precise, recent numbers?

Sec. Kennedy – I can’t answer this, but Chris Klomp can. We went through a lot of effort to delink chart reviews from payments. I will find out for you why this is.

Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI) – I’m thankful for your commitment to radical transparency. Those who were injured by the COVID-19 vaccine want retribution. The injection-injured would like their injuries treated. We have no ICD code for these. Are you willing to look for that?

Sec. Kennedy – We are working on it. We’re now doing studies, and reviewing data such as coroner’s reports.

Senator Tina Smith – Would you agree that mammograms are important preventive healthcare? Why did your agency cut funding from the program that supports this? Depression screening? Your admin cut Medicaid which is the largest payer for mental health treatment. Are you familiar with Title X?

Sec. Kennedy – First of all, there are no cuts to Medicaid. CBO said spending would increase over the next 10 years. We’re also returning much of this funding to the states. The states can administer the programs better than we can.

Senator Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) – CBO said last year that there was a \$990 billion cut to Medicaid. Let’s talk about vaccines. History shows that you’ve pushed vaccine misinformation.

Sec. Kennedy – Tell me one instance where I shared misinformation. You’re just making things up Senator.

Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) – Thank you for your efforts to tackle fraud. What are you doing with aggregating state data? How do you plan to make audits necessary?

Sec. Kennedy – The Biden admin took many steps to enable this fraud, such as pay and chase/clawbacks. They also fired HHS fraud investigators. We shut down 500 fraudulent hospices in Los Angeles and haven’t heard any complaints. Some states have refused to work with us.

Senator Blackburn – Moving to the area wage index. Do you support bringing this into parity for rural hospitals?

Sec. Kennedy – Yes, but we need congressional help.

Senator Todd Young (R-IN) – How are you working with FDA to advance treatment for long COVID?

Sec. Kennedy – We're working with many of the doctors we brought in to develop biomarkers. We're putting everything up on a website for patient access.

Senator Young – We've assessed that our nation's biotech research and production is at risk of falling behind the Chinese Communist Party. Chinese pharmaceutical companies have increased market share. How can we spur further domestic development and investment in US biotech?

Sec. Kennedy – China developed roughly half of new drugs last year. They are stealing our tech, scientists, and data. But we're making progress through priority review, such as new oncology drugs. We're now doing inspections in China, uncovering unethical testing. We're investing hundreds of millions in reshoring API production.

Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) – By cutting NIH funding and imposing MFN price controls, HHS is squeezing both sides of a balloon while expecting it not to pop. We've used a simplistic approach to lowering drug prices, such as MFN. It doesn't affect supply chain actors. What makes this different than prior Democratic approaches to price controls?

Sec. Kennedy – President Trump wanted lower prices without reducing R&D and while reshoring productions. Our work is reflected in the share price of these pharma companies, which increased steadily over the past year.

Senator Tillis – If MFN is so effective, why not make it universal?

Sec. Kennedy – There are unique considerations for each of the companies we negotiated with.

Senator Tillis – If each company is so unique, how can we possibly codify MFN deals later on?

Sec. Kennedy – That is a long discussion. Chris Klomp is working on legislative language for this.

Senator Peter Welch (D-VT) – My chart shows that TrumpRx doesn't offer the cheapest prices in the U.S. Everyday Americans also can't access TrumpRx, such as those with federal health care coverage. You mentioned \$1.3 increase in drug company stocks, how does that benefit patients? All but one of the TrumpRx companies have increased prices since entering into MFN agreements. I have a bill with Senator Hawley, the Fair Prescription Drug Prices for Americans Act, which prevents companies for selling drugs in the US higher than the international average. Will you work with us in this?

Sec. Kennedy – Yes. But TrumpRx is not every drug, it's the lowest price on the most commonly used drugs. It's apples to oranges.

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) – Your statement that we paid the lowest prices in the world is absurd. We now pay 3x for drugs compared to OECD companies. I'm working on legislation consistent with the president's sentiments. I will offer an amendment to codify what Trump is talking about.

Sec. Kennedy – That's exactly what we want.

Senator Sanders – Surgeon General nominee Means agrees that we need to ban prescription drug tv ads. Is that something you want to see?

Sec. Kennedy – We have first amendment limitations but yes, I would.

Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA) – Do you know what rabies is? It's 100% fatal in humans. Since you took office, the CDC 24/7 rabies hotline in Atlanta has one full time staffer remaining.

Sec. Kennedy – You know how many rabies cases we get in the United States?

Senator Warnock – Do you know what a prion disease is? Do you know which office at CDC monitors prion disease? Do you know what population is most at risk of prion disease? Your budget offers to eliminate this office. Why are you proposing this?

Sec. Kennedy – There are a lot of cuts for things nobody wants. We've been asked to cut 12% across the board. There are 1-3 rabies cases a year in the US.

Senator Warnock – The folks at CDC protect us every day. They don't get credit for the stuff that doesn't happen. Your cuts could put the American public at risk.

Senator Roger Marshall (R-KS) – I've never seen so many misleading statements from my colleagues across the aisle. Two thirds of the people with measles last year were over the age of 5. The outbreak began before you were in office. And the problem with flu vaccines is they are not very efficacious.

Sec. Kennedy – We are trying to make a universal vaccine.

Senator Marshall – I'm glad my colleagues have recognized the failure of Obamacare. Why do we have failing hospitals? Overregulation. I think you've done more for rural health than any admin ever, do you?

Sec. Kennedy – Yes, I think that's correct.

Question & Answer Highlights – HELP Committee:

Chair Cassidy – The removal of the in-person requirement for abortion drug dispensing is still in place. Why has the department not acted with greater urgency on reinstating the in-person dispensing requirement?

Sec. Kennedy – I won't be able to answer due to ongoing litigation.

Chair Cassidy – Why hasn't the department taken steps to stop the importation and sale of counterfeit abortion drugs in the U.S.?

Sec. Kennedy – We take our responsibility to prosecute those selling misbranded drugs seriously. As far as I know, we're doing that as much as possible.

Senator Cassidy – It's safe to say that trust in public health has fallen last year due to your false statements on immunization. I do, however, applaud the selection of the new CDC Director. Will the new Director have the right to make decisions independently of CDC political appointees?

Sec. Kennedy – Your characterization of the political employees is wrong, but the Director would have that power.

Senator Cassidy – What steps is HHS taking to address the outbreaks that may arise from the World Cup?

Sec. Kennedy – The measles outbreak began before I started, it has nothing to do with me. Ask the governors of South Carolina or Texas. We know how to control the outbreaks. We have testing booths too.

Ranking Member Sanders – Do you still believe, as you said in your book, that vaccines have not reduced infant mortality?

Sec. Kennedy – CDC has done a real study to answer this (Guyer 2000). It found that infant mortality was attributed to other factors.

Ranking Member Sanders – President Trump’s nominee for surgeon general, Casey Means, told this committee that junk food ads should be banned from TV. Do you agree?

Sec. Kennedy – I agree. The only hesitation is when we threatened a smoking ad ban that pushed the companies to come to the table.

Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) – Only about 10% of people are eligible for HSAs. I would allow the entire country to be eligible for HSAs. I would also allow patients to negotiate. We have legislation to do this, letting people join an association plan regardless of employment.

Sec. Kennedy – Wouldn’t it be better we gave the billions given to insurance companies to patients instead in the form of HSAs?

Senator Rand Paul – I’m for the idea that money would be directed to patients instead.

Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) – Who in your department was in charge of monitoring which health facilities closed as a result of last year’s reconciliation bill?

Sec. Kennedy – The same guy in charge of monitoring closures due to ACA regulations. That would be Dr. Oz.

Senator Kaine – Now that I know Dr. Oz is focused on this, I’ll direct my questions that way.

Sec. Kennedy – I know it’s a tragedy for a community to lose a hospital. We’re doing everything in our power to help. This is not a problem that was created by the Trump administration.

Senator Kaine – Yes but three closing facilities in my state alluded to H.R. 1 as the reason for closure.

Senator Marshall – What has the Trump administration to support rural health care?

Sec. Kennedy – Well, a main Democrat talking point is that we’ve cut Medicaid. But if you look at CBO, CBO says that we’re increasing Medicaid spending by 46% through 2036. Plus, the Rural Health Transformation Fund is the biggest influx of rural health funding ever, nearly a 50% increase.

Senator Marshall – You guys have done great work on transparency, but what more can we do? We have legislation on transparency, prior authorization. Let's get it across the finish line.

Senator Hassan – President Trump has made it harder for families to afford groceries. Do these high prices make it harder or easier to eat healthy food?

Sec. Kennedy – You can eat beef, poultry, fish. The price of beef is contained by the size of the herd.

Sen. Hassan – You've said that glyphosate causes cancer, and you've expressed displeasure with the president's executive order. Does that mean more people will be exposed to it?

Sec. Kennedy – No, it doesn't increase the use of glyphosate. It increases domestic production to reduce Chinese production.

Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) – Can you explain why European countries allow fewer ingredients into their food than we do in the US?

Sec. Kennedy – Congress has talked about this for many years. It's the GRAS standard, which excludes foods traditionally recognized as safe. We have thousands of ingredients added, none of which FDA knows about.

Senator Tuberville – I also appreciate the work you've done for our veterans by expanding access to psychedelic therapies for treatment of mental health issues. Can you speak to that briefly?

Sec. Kennedy – Johns Hopkins research finds ibogaine therapy to be one of the most effective PTSD treatments we've ever seen.

Senator Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) – Does the president know that we have an ongoing measles surge nationwide?

Sec. Kennedy – The outbreak started before I came in. It's a global outbreak. I'm sure he knows.

Senator Blunt Rochester – Does the president think this is not a significant issue?

Sec. Kennedy – Losing our measles elimination status? That's happening in many countries. Yes, he knows.

Senator Blunt Rochester – Have you asked the president to sound the alarm and ask people to get the measles vaccine?

Sec. Kennedy – That's not his job, that's my job. I'm doing my job.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) – I'm concerned about the reductions to the sanitary facilities construction account. You've seen what happens to communities without running water and sanitary facilities. I want to make sure that you're committed to maintaining funding for tribal sanitary facilities construction.

Sec. Kennedy – I've made more visits to Indian country than any HHS Secretary. It's up to Congress to pass or prevent these cuts.

Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) – ACA premiums have double or even tripled this year after the administration failed to extend tax credits. Do you know how many Americans have lost health insurance through the marketplace this year?

Sec. Kennedy – 87% of the credits are still in place, so 87% of ACA beneficiaries are still getting insurance for under \$96 per year.

Senator Baldwin – The answer is 1.3 million. 22 thousand in Wisconsin. What percentage of individuals were unable to pay ACA premiums in January? WSJ indicated that 14% of enrollees were unable to pay. Do you know how much overall enrollment is expected to decline?

Sec. Kennedy – Last time we looked, it was flat. Except for the 1.5 million people committing fraud.

Senator Baldwin – Do you know how many Americans would lose coverage under your proposed rule to modify ACA plans for 2027?

Sec. Kennedy – Under the ACA rule? I can't tell you the exact number.

Senator Baldwin – It's two million. On top of the 15 million expected to lose coverage because of H.R. 1.

Senator Ashley Moody (R-FL) – How transformative are HHS' new nutritional guidelines going to be for America?

Sec. Kennedy – 80% of young doctors today say they're inadequately prepared to provide nutrition advice. 90% of our health care costs are chronic disease caused by poor nutrition. The new standards will allow people to live healthily without pharmaceutical intervention.

Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) – Is CDC or HHS ready and able to detect localized flu outbreaks in the military after they stopped requiring the flu shot?

Sec. Kennedy – The flu shot is an ineffective intervention, with efficacy of roughly 20%. Some studies show the vaccine actually increases risk. I don't know if there is any program specific to the military.

Senator Alan Armstrong (R-OK) – I want to discuss FDA approval. What do you think can be done in the future to speed up development?

Sec. Kennedy – I think we've done more than any other department in integrating AI. Our new voluntary platform, Elsa, has shown promise to accelerate drug approvals. AI will revolutionize medicine, and may one day make FDA irrelevant. AI is also very dangerous but has a capacity to bring great benefit.

Senator Armstrong – You've done a lot of department consolidation recently. I'd like to know more about your vision for the future with this consolidation.

Sec. Kennedy – We've been working for a year to reorganize the department for over a year. When I came in, we had dozens of separate offices for various health issues; none of them talked to each other. We've developed proposals for streamlining, which we won't do unilaterally. We've submitted these proposals to Congress.

Senator John Hickenlooper (D-CO) –Where is the money going to come to cover the costs of President Trump’s health care cuts for local governments?

Sec. Kennedy – The big enemy of our country is chronic disease, which kills millions of Americans every year and is a huge driver of cost.

Senator Hickenlooper – Patients in an mRNA cancer trial are alive six years later, which is exciting for mRNA technology and research. But we still feel hostility to this research, as you’ve said HHS will shift to safer vaccines.

Sec. Kennedy – I’ve authorized \$500 million for cancer vaccines. I eliminated COVID vaccines because COVID is gone.

Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) – The Department recently allowed Title X grants to flow to states for abortion services and gender transition surgeries. When are we going to stop funding groups like this?

Sec. Kennedy – We paused those grants and looked at litigation risk, which was very high. We’re paying out the last year of these 5 year grants.

Senator Hawley – I’m asked constantly about the health risks of data centers. Is something that HHS helps study, so we know what we’re dealing with?

Sec. Kennedy – I’ve litigated on this issue. We produced over 10,000 studies on this. There are a range of neurological injuries that are well documented. The risks are horrendous. I’ve asked HHS and the surgeon general’s office to do additional studies on this.

Senator Andy Kim (D-NJ) – Are you familiar with the Limb Loss Resource Center? You are proposing to eliminate it. Why?

Sec. Kennedy – No. We’ve been asked to make 12% cuts across the department. Maybe there was a conclusion that these were duplicative services.

Senator Kim – This budget you’re proposing zeroes out dedicated funding for this. The Paralysis Resource Center is also being defunded. What do these programs have in common?

Sec. Kennedy – They sound like programs to treat disabilities.

Senator Kim – Exactly, would you reconsider funding for these programs?

Sec. Kennedy – I’m happy to talk to your office about that.

Senator Jim Banks (R-IN) – What message do you have for families counting on you to make American Healthy Again?

Sec. Kennedy – My predecessors didn’t spend a single dollar on combatting chronic disease. Now we’re spending billions to tackle this epidemic. This is an existential issue. We have the highest chronic disease burden of any developed country in the world. This has to be our highest priority, including

combatting chronic disease. We're focused on measles outbreak, but it can't be the only thing we're focused on. The death rates we saw during COVID were also due to chronic disease burdens. Democrats on this committee are only focused on measles. It's tribalism.

Senator Banks – We've talked about what China has done to take over the drug industry. Can you talk about the threat of clinical trials in China?

Sec. Kennedy – They're approving drugs much faster over there. Our regulatory process takes 15 years. They're also taking unethical steps in their research, forcing communities to participate in trials.

Senator Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD) – You're familiar with Aaron Siri, correct? Is he on the federal government payroll? He seems to have an outsized role in federal vaccine policy. You remade the ACIP charter after Aaron Siri told you to do so. Who is running this department?

Sec. Kennedy – Yes. He is not. You're just filled with mischaracterizations.

Senator – Mr. Siri is on X pressuring you to change your vaccine recommendations. Is it the White House ordering you to make these changes?

Sec. Kennedy – No they are not.

Senator Alsobrooks – Aaron Siri criticized your new CDC Director nominee including her views on vaccines. Does he have an outside influence on the process?

Sec. Kennedy – Well I guess he's not in charge because we can't have it both ways. He's suing me and criticizing me. Is that an outside influence or not?

Senator Alsobrooks – You said that every black kid should be reparented. That you'd send "every black kid to live on a farm and work." Can you confirm that?

Sec. Kennedy – I'd like to see the recording. If you ask me my opinion, I don't believe every black kid should be sent to a farm to work. If I said it, I apologize.

Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) – Were you aware of meetings between Monsanto and the White House?

Sec. Kennedy – No. I've already expressed my disagreement with the President about this issue.

Chair Cassidy – Should we give the FDA authority to confiscate imported foods?

Sec. Kennedy – Yes, they should have that authority. The same is true for vapes. These companies can bypass US inspections by moving ports.

Hearing Recording:

- Senate Finance: <https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/the-presidents-fiscal-year-2027-department-of-health-and-human-services-budget>
- Senate HELP: <https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing-on-fiscal-year-2027-department-of-health-and-human-services-budget>