

PPC CAPITOL CONNECTION

March 4, 2022

What Matters Now in Washington:

- Key congressional leaders agreed to a topline spending figure earlier this month, paving the way to full-year spending bills for the remainder of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. [More...](#)
- President Biden's proposal for a new Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health remains popular in concept, but lawmakers continue to squabble about key policy details. [More...](#)
- Robert Califf, MD, was confirmed as the commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) earlier this month. [More...](#)
- Find new funding opportunities, research findings, and more below. [More...](#)
- PPC members authored policy commentaries in *Pediatric Research* exploring the intersections of child health policy, advocacy, and pediatric research. [More...](#)
- See articles we're reading. [More...](#)

CONGRESS MOVES CLOSER TO FULL-YEAR SPENDING BILL. Top congressional leaders [clinched a bipartisan deal](#) on a topline spending figure for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, a critical development that will allow appropriators to finish negotiating [individual spending bills](#) that fund each part of the federal government. The deal came days before the federal government was set to run out of money, though Congress was forced to pass an [additional stopgap spending measure](#) to keep the government open. Under that legislation, appropriators will have until March 11 to negotiate full-year spending legislation.

Based on proposals from the House and Senate, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) looks set to see an increase of roughly \$2.5 billion, which would include a \$100 million increase for the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Gun violence prevention research at the NIH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would double to \$50 million in total under both the House and Senate proposals. And the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program (PSLRP) would see first-time funding of as much as \$30 million depending on the final agreement. The PPC sent an action alert to members recently encouraging them to contact their members of Congress to urge a final funding bill that includes these priorities.

Despite the progress, it is important to note that Democrats and Republicans [must still resolve a number of important outstanding issues](#), including specific funding levels for thousands of federal programs and the fate of numerous thorny policy issues impacting federal spending, such as the [Hyde Amendment](#) which bans federal funding for abortion care.

FATE OF PROPOSED BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDER UNCLEAR AS CONGRESS DEBATES DETAILS.

President Joe Biden proposed a new \$6.5 billion research agency, dubbed the [Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health](#) (ARPA-H), in his FY 2022 budget proposal last spring. Modeled off the successful Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, ARPA-H is intended to speed research that can bring biomedical breakthroughs to market. Nearly a year later, Congress has yet to settle on the specifics of what the new agency will look like and where in the federal government it will sit.

The idea for ARPA-H was unveiled to bipartisan support, including from Reps. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) and Fred Upton (R-Mich.); the bipartisan pair behind the 21st Century Cures Act Congress that passed in 2016 [introduced legislation](#) last year to create the new agency. From the beginning, however, the question of [where a new ARPA-H should be housed](#) has divided members of Congress, scientists, and advocates. The [Biden administration's proposal](#) envisioned ARPA-H as a part of NIH to complement the agency's successes in basic and clinical research. Despite NIH's broad bipartisan support, some members of Congress on both sides of the aisle have questioned whether NIH's culture, which emphasizes extensive peer review of research proposals and a more conservative approach to risk taking, is the best fit for an agency like ARPA-H.

More recently, the debate has taken on a [more partisan tone](#) that mirrors some of the political challenges to scientific expertise that have grown during the pandemic. Republicans have begun to raise broader concerns about expanding the federal government's biomedical research footprint given their misgivings about Dr. Anthony Fauci's role in the pandemic response. These concerns were amplified by the [abrupt resignation](#) of Dr. Eric Lander from the role of [chief White House scientist](#), whose absence at a [House hearing on ARPA-H](#) just a day later was notable.

While ARPA-H retains significant bipartisan support, it is possible that its boosters in Congress will need to make concessions to get the agency up and running.

SENATE CONFIRMS BIDEN'S PICK FOR FDA COMMISSIONER. The U.S. Senate [voted to confirm](#) President Biden's nominee for Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Robert Califf late last month. The 50-46 vote was narrower than many had initially expected after senators raised [concerns](#) about Dr. Califf's ties to the drug industry and a recent FDA decision to expand access to medication abortion drugs. In a [series of tweets](#) after his confirmation, Commissioner Califf laid out his priorities for the agency, which include a continued focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to address the opioid epidemic, and regulation of tobacco products to prevent youth use.

KEY RESEARCH UPDATES

- [NIH: Children born during pandemic may experience slight neurodevelopmental delays, NIH-funded study suggests](#)
- [NIH: People from racial, ethnic, and other groups report frequent COVID-19-related discrimination](#)
- [NIH: ECHO Researchers Use Silicone Wristbands to Measure Chemical Exposures During Pregnancy](#)
- [NICHD: Active Funding Announcements and Notices](#)

PPC POLICY COMMENTARIES. Members of the PPC have authored commentaries detailing the policy implications of research published in *Pediatric Research*. You can read these PPC-authored commentaries online:

- [Advocacy for research starting early in the life course](#) by Tina Cheng, MD, MPH, Carolyn Russo, MD, Conrad Cole, MD, MPH, MSc, and David A. Williams, MD
- [Extending public insurance postpartum coverage: implications for maternal and child health](#) by Mona Patel, MD, and Jean Raphael, MD, MPH
- [The COVID-19 pandemic and pediatric mental health: advocating for improved access and recognition](#) by Abdallah Dalabih, MD, Erin Bennett, MD, and Joyce Javier, MD, MPH, MS

WHAT WE'RE READING

- [New York Times: Francis Collins, a former N.I.H. director, will fill in as a science adviser to Biden.](#)
- [Washington Post: White House aides weigh deficit reduction as way to revamp economic plan for Manchin](#)
- [ABC News: Pandemic's impact on youth mental health 'devastating': Surgeon General](#)
- [New York Times: Cash Aid to Poor Mothers Increases Brain Activity in Babies, Study Finds](#)