



Week 3 of interim committee weeks leading up to the 2026 Legislative session saw lawmakers focused on major policy issues, including a renewed push to raise liability caps for lawsuits against government entities, education K-12 voucher funding shortfalls, and expanding E-verify requirements for all businesses. Committee meetings also featured updates on health care programs and Medicaid reforms. Legislators will be back in Tallahassee for more committee meetings November 17. The Legislative session begins January 13, 2026, and is scheduled to conclude on March 13, 2026.

Health Care Reform Remains a Key Focus this Week

The House Health and Human Services Committee heard a [presentation](#) from the Agency for Health Care Administration's (AHCA) on the Rural Health Transformation Program - a federal initiative from the "Big Beautiful Bill." The program provides \$50 billion over five years, split evenly between Baseline Funding (\$25 billion distributed equally among approved states, up to \$100 million annually per state) and Workload Funding (\$25 billion allocated by CMS based on need and state applications). AHCA submitted its application for funding to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on November 3, focusing on workforce development, expanding primary and preventive care, and enhancing telehealth access to specialty care. CMS will announce state awards on December 31, 2025. Several committee members expressed interest in reviewing the application and exploring potential statutory changes to help Florida maximize its funding.

The House Health Professions and Programs Subcommittee heard a [presentation](#) from the Florida Rare Disease Advisory Council (RDAC) on rare-disease policy in Florida, the prevalence of rare diseases and the RDAC's 2025 recommendations: enhancing provider education, improving data collection and diagnosis, expanding research funding (notably via the Pediatric Rare Disease Grant Program), and establishing Centers of Excellence for care and research. Next steps for the Council include creating an online patient/family resource repository and strengthening coordination among stakeholders.

The House Human Services Subcommittee received a [briefing](#) from Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) on [HB 7021 \(2024\)](#) — legislation that modernized Florida's mental-health and substance-abuse laws (including substantial updates to the Baker Act, the Marchman Act, and new oversight structures for children's behavioral health). The briefing

outlined key statutory changes – including greater discretion for law-enforcement, streamlined involuntary outpatient services, enhanced discharge planning, creation of the Office of Children’s Behavioral Health Ombudsman, and regional collaboratives. The presentation also described DCF’s five-part implementation strategy (reference guides, training updates, rule amendments, regional collaboratives, the children’s ombudsman), and provided early implementation metrics, including training delivery, rule adoption, structure of regional collaboratives, and funding allocations.

The House Health Care Facilities and Systems Subcommittee received an **implementation briefing** by AHCA on three initiatives passed last session: **HB 1085 (2025)** (Children’s Medical Services), **HB 1227 (2025)** (Medicaid Enrollment for Permanently Disabled Individuals), and **HB 1529 (2025)** (Home Health Aides for Medically Fragile Children Program). AHCA officials outlined efforts to streamline eligibility and enrollment processes for individuals with permanent disabilities, improve care coordination and quality standards within the Children’s Medical Services program, and enhance oversight of home health aides serving medically fragile children. Members emphasized the importance of workforce development, timely provider reimbursement, and data transparency to ensure successful execution of these new laws.

Meanwhile Governor Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis **announced** that the state of Florida will award \$30 million in grants to four children’s specialty hospitals - Johns Hopkins All Children’s Hospital (St. Petersburg), Nemours Children’s Hospital (Orlando), Nicklaus Children’s Hospital (Miami) and Wolfson Children’s Hospital (Jacksonville) - to develop and improve access to clinical trials, treatment-protocol innovation and cures for pediatric cancer.

The funding comes via the newly created **Cancer Connect** Collaborative Research Incubator within the Florida Department of Health (DOH), which will focus on pediatric cancer in its first five-year cycle and is part of a broader push to prevent children and adolescents in Florida from having to leave the state for experimental therapies.

Legislation of Interest

(listed alphabetically)

Acupuncture – HB 169 by Rep. Jose Alvarez (D-Kissimmee) revises licensure requirements for acupuncturists including allowing for the order and administration of herbs, homeopathic and other nutritional supplements.

Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Autonomous Practice – SB 138 by Sen. Keith Truenow (R-Tavares) and **HB 301** by Rep. Jason Shoaf (R-Port St. Joe) authorize certain advanced practice registered nurses to engage in autonomous practice to provide mental health services as defined by the Board of Nursing.

Continuity of Care in Health Insurance Contracts – SB 114 by Sen. Shevrin Jones (D-Miami Gardens) requires health insurers

Mandatory Human Reviews of Insurance Claim Denials – SB 202 by Sen. Jennifer Bradley (R-Flemming Island) requires that insurers’ decisions to deny a claim or any portion of a claim be made by qualified human professionals and prohibits the use of algorithms, artificial intelligence, or machine learning systems as the sole basis for determining whether to adjust or deny a claim.

Medicaid Providers - SB 40 by Sen. Barbara Sharief (D-Davie) and **HB 163** by Rep. Felicia Robinson (D-Miami Gardens) require the AHCA to establish standards to ensure that Medicaid enrollees have access to network providers during state holidays and outside of regular business hours.

and contracted health care practitioners to provide 60 days' notice before contract termination and allows certain policyholders to continue coverage and care for a specified timeframe.

Coverage for Mammograms and Supplemental Breast Cancer Screenings – HB 137 by Rep. Dianne Hart (D-Tampa) requires AHCA to provide coverage for yearly mammograms and yearly supplemental breast cancer screenings to certain Medicaid women and revises coverages for mammograms and supplemental breast cancer screenings under certain individual accident and health insurance policies.

Florida Health Choices Program – HB 141 by Rep. Taylor Yarkosky (R-Clermont) renames the "Florida Health Choices Program" as "Florida Employee Health Choices Program" and revises purposes and components of program. The bill revises eligibility and participation requirements for vendors under the program, the types of health insurance products that are available for purchase through program, removes certain pricing transparency requirements, revises the structure of the insurance marketplace process under the program, removes the option for risk pooling under the program, and removes exemptions from certain requirements of Florida Insurance Code under the program.

Naturopathic Medicine – HB 223 by Rep. David Smith (R-Winter Springs) reestablishes licensure and regulation of naturopathic physicians, and establishes new standards for the practice. The bill provides licensure authority over naturopathic physicians to the Department of Health and creates the Board of Naturopathic Medicine to assist DOH in the regulation of naturopathic physicians.

Parental Rights – SB 166 by Sen. Erin Grail (R-Fort Pierce) and **HB 173** by Rep. Kim Kendall (R-St. Johns) revise requirements for the provision of maternal health and contraceptive information and services to minors. The bills require consent from a parent or guardian for a minor's treatment for certain diseases, repeal a provision relating to minors' access to outpatient crisis intervention services and treatment, and require school districts to provide parents with specified information before the district administers certain questionnaires or forms to students.

Recovery of Damages for Medical Negligence Resulting in Death – HB 6003 by Rep. Dana Tabulsky (R-Fort Peirce) and Rep. Dr. Anna Eskamani (D-Orlando) deletes a provision prohibiting the recovery of certain damages by specified parties related to the decedent in wrongful death proceedings.

HB 6003 was approved by the House Civil Justice and Claims Subcommittee on Wednesday, 10/15.

Use of Professional Nursing Titles - SB 36 by Sen. Barbara Sharief (D-Davie) and **HB 237** by Rep. Michelle Salzman (R-Cantonment) authorize certain nurses the title Doctor of Nursing Practice and the abbreviation D.N.P., and the title of Doctor of Philosophy and the abbreviation PhD. The bills also require doctoral degree holders to specify their profession when using the term "doctor."

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