

Democrats decry a new health package as too easy on private equity



By Rachel Cohrs July 26, 2023



Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.)DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES

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ASHINGTON — A rift between Democrats and Republicans over health care

transparency was on full display in the House on Wednesday.

Republicans on the House Ways & Means Committee [introduced a package](#) this week that they say would increase health care transparency, but Democrats and outside groups are arguing that it doesn't go far enough to force companies to disclose information about their ownership. They also think it goes too easy on the private equity firms that are buying up health care practices.

“There was an opportunity here for bipartisanship, but I think we ought to reference that in the past tense,” said ranking Democrat Richard Neal (D-Mass.).

The Ways & Means package passed on party lines, in contrast to a separate, more strict effort from the Energy & Commerce Committee that passed unanimously.

Other interest groups focused on consumers also criticized the Ways & Means package, saying that the bill's transparency requirements for hospitals are actually weaker than regulations that are already in effect.

Patient Rights Advocate, an organization founded by billionaire price transparency advocate [Cynthia Fisher](#) said the proposal “falls short of existing federal rules and other more widely supported transparency legislation.”

Families USA, a liberal-leaning consumer advocacy group, described the bill as “rolling back existing federal regulations that require hospitals and plans to post the actual price of health care services.”

The package [also would ensure](#) that patients in the Medicare program pay for medicines they pick up at the pharmacy counter based on the discounted price that insurers negotiate with drugmakers, instead of higher sticker prices, starting in 2027. Another provision would equalize what Medicare pays physicians to administer drugs between hospital outpatient departments and doctors' offices.

Republican leadership will need to reconcile different versions of the legislation across three different committees if they want to advance a package to the House floor.

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