House panel votes to kill WISeR prior authorization pilot

A key House panel voted unanimously Tuesday to end a pilot program testing prior authorizations in fee-for-service Medicare.

The House Appropriations Committee approved legislative language that would bar the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services from spending money to implement the Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction Model, or WISeR, which the agency launched in six states this January. This provision was amended to a bill to fund the Health and Human Services Department in fiscal 2027, which the panel is still considering.

Providers have blasted WISeR, a six-year demonstration that is partly reliant on artificial intelligence and is being managed by technology companies.

The HHS appropriations bill must clear more hurdles, including advancing out of committee, passing the House and being reconciled with the Senate's pending version of the spending package, before the WISeR provisions would become law.

But a powerful committee endorsing a policy that would effectively end WISeR signals lawmakers' growing distaste for prior authorizations and for this program in particular.

Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.), who chairs the HHS appropriations subcommittee, hailed the WISeR provisions as bipartisan, while Appropriations Committee ranking member Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) characterized them as "noncontroversial." Democrats previously had been more vocal in their opposition to WISeR, with 45 sponsoring a House bill to stop it.

The WISeR provisions approved Tuesday would prevent CMS from using its funding for that program or "any such model that implements prior authorizations in traditional Medicare."

Election year politics mean Congress may not complete the federal appropriations process before the fiscal year begins Oct. 1. For years, lawmakers have relied on stopgap measures to sustain federal operations for short terms, and then enacted omnibus bills for the entire government after Election Day.

Correction: A previous version of this story incorrectly stated that the House Appropriations Committee passed legislation to fund the HHS, Labor and Education departments in fiscal 2027.