# December 2023 Advocacy Recap

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Hello and Happy New Year. Welcome to the CAP Advocacy Recap, a monthly podcast dedicated to catching you up on the top news for pathologists. I'm Alec Bose here with your December 2023 recap. This month we'll take a look at efforts to mitigate recent Medicare cuts, digital and cybersecurity news in the health care sector and more.

We start the day with health IT related news and its impacts on pathology. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology release the final HT one rule, which updates its health IT certification program. The purpose of this rule is to advance interoperability, improve transparency, and support the access exchange and use of electronic health information. The CAP prioritizes a number of issues in the proposed version of this rule. These included initiatives like laboratory data interoperability, requests for information transparency, requirements of artificial intelligence and information blocking provisions, particularly focused on reducing potential patient harm and improving care coordination. While many of these priorities are included in the final rule, the ONC decided to defer any action on laboratory information system certification to future rulemaking. So the impact on pathology services is expected to be minimal. We will keep you updated on this policy and its impacts on the healthcare sector.

In related news, the HHS released a new cybersecurity plan to advance digital resiliency for hospitals, patients, and communities threatened by cyber-attacks. The plan outlines the following steps. One, establish voluntary cybersecurity performance goals for the healthcare sector. Two, the HHS with the input from industry will establish and publish voluntary sector specific cybersecurity performance goals. Three, provide resources to incentivize and implement the cybersecurity practices. Four, the HHS will work with Congress to obtain new authority and funding to support hospital investments and cybersecurity. Five, implement an HHS wide strategy to support greater enforcement and accountability. Six, the HHS will work with hospitals to meet sector specific cybersecurity performance goals in the coming years. Seven, expand and mature the one-stop shop within HHS for healthcare sector cybersecurity. Eight, the HHS will mature its one-stop shop cybersecurity support function for the healthcare sector within the administration of strategic preparedness and response to more effectively enable industry to access the support and services the federal government has to offer. We will continue to follow this story as the plan is implemented and its impact.

We turn now to legislative action on Medicare cuts. A house committee passed legislation that would mitigate the impact of Medicare cuts in 2024. This comes shortly after the Senate Finance Committee pass similar legislation that would also raise budget neutralities thresholds and extend bonuses for alternative payment models.

While the CAP applauds the passage of short-term relief and efforts to stabilize the physician payment system, we remain disappointed that Congress has yet to pass legislation that will mitigate cuts to pathology services in 2024. Without Congressional Action, physicians will face a 3.37% cut. CAP members have attended hundreds of meetings with their congressional representatives, sent thousands of messages to over 350 members of Congress and numerous other advocacy efforts to fight for the profession. CAP President Dr. Donald Karcher highlighted the urgency needed to mitigate these cuts.

In a statement to congressional leaders, pathologists and their laboratories have endured several challenges in recent years to meet the demands of the US Health System while facing declining reimbursements. Our commitment to our patients is unwavering. At the same time, physicians cannot continue to do more with fewer resources while coping with workforce shortages and inflationary pressures. We must still invest in new technology and advanced laboratory infrastructure to maintain and enhance quality patient care. Congress must honor its commitment to seniors and the physicians who care for them by stabilizing Medicare Pay in the short term and long term. That's all for this edition of the Advocacy Recap. Thank you so much for listening. For more information on any of the stories that you heard today, be sure to subscribe to our weekly newsletter and follow us on X at C-A-P-D-C advocacy once again for advocacy communications. I'm Alec Bose, and we'll see you next month.