

May 9, 2025

The Honorable Chairman Bill Cassidy,
M.D.
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ranking Member Bernie
Sanders
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: QUESTIONS FOR THE SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS (HELP)
COMMITTEE: HEARING ON THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)
REORGANIZATION**

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

The Friends of ASTP, a voluntary coalition of organizations that support the Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy/Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ASTP), is aware that the HELP Committee may be hosting a hearing with Secretary Kennedy on May 14. The Friends of ASTP offers the below background on the crucial role of ASTP and asks the Committee to consider asking Secretary Kennedy the questions below regarding his plan for ASTP and the protection and use of the nation's sensitive healthcare data.

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) was established in 2004 under President George W. Bush's administration and has enjoyed bipartisan support for its important work advancing the interoperability of health data through its EHR certification program and the security of digital health data. ONC was renamed to ASTP in 2024 when the safe use of artificial intelligence (AI) across the spectrum of healthcare fell under its purview.

Within HHS, ASTP plays a critical role in developing and implementing policies to ensure the nation takes a strategic and coordinated approach to its data, technology, interoperability, and AI programs. ASTP is pivotal to American digital health technology infrastructure, securing patient data, assuring availability of patient data for clinical care, and streamlining access to large data sets for research.

We are now almost 4 months into President Trump's second term and the Administration has yet to nominate anyone to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy and National Coordinator for Health IT. Work by that office has essentially come to a halt, and it is unclear what the Administration intends to do in the important areas of interoperability, artificial intelligence and securing patients' digital privacy.

The President's FY 2026 leaked budget request proposed to eliminate ASTP and ASTP was left out of the March 27 HHS reorganization [press release](#).

1. Mr. Secretary, can you share with us your vision for the future role of ASTP, explain how that office was impacted by the recent Departmental reorganization, and the timing of when the Administration will nominate a new Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy?
2. If ASTP were to be defunded, what entities do you envision stepping in to fill the role ASTP has performed in improving the quality and security of health care data and expanding secure access to that data by patients and healthcare providers?
3. To advance the national agenda on chronic disease, how will you prioritize the collection, analysis, and application of data to identify the most prevalent chronic conditions and accurately determine their impact on Americans? What strategies will you use to ensure that health informatics and artificial intelligence (AI) are integrated into this research agenda? Within the reorganized HHS, which teams or divisions will be responsible for conducting this research, and who will be charged with translating evidence-based findings into practice to improve patient outcomes?
4. ASTP, and ONC before it, has led the way in health IT and AI policy, with input from various key organizations. Can those relations be continued with moving ASTP into another organization?
5. HHS/ASTP has promulgated several Health Data, Technology, and Interoperability rules, namely HTI-1 and HTI-2, designed to create greater transparency and trustworthiness in artificial intelligence tools. Transparency and trustworthiness are essential in protecting patients in today's era of electronic health information and AI-enabled medicine. If ASTP is eliminated per President Trump's FY 2026 budget proposal, what federal entities will be responsible for enforcing these rules and developing additional rules as the technological landscape continues to evolve?

Our organizations fully support ASTP's mission to support the nation's appropriate and safe use of technology, data, and AI to advance the health and well-being of the American people. Thank you for your time and attention. Please reach out to Reva Singh (rsingh@amia.org) with questions.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA)
The Center for Telehealth and e-Health Law
College of American Pathologists (CAP)
Learning Health Community
Manijeh Berenji MD Consulting Inc
Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medical Association (PALTmed)
The Society of General Internal Medicine