

ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY FOR HEALTH (ARPA-H)

Earlier this spring, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra named Adam H. Russell, D.Phil. Acting Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). The Secretary also announced the establishment of the ARPA-H as an independent entity within the NIH but reporting directly to the Secretary. Dr. Russell brings experience as a former Program Manager for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) program which shares similar objectives to ARPA-H, including the focus on high-risk, high-reward research projects.

The position of ARPA-H still may be modified as the House of Representatives passed legislation authorizing ARPA-H on June 22. The bill, HR 5585, passed by a vote of 336 to 85, and would establish ARPA-H as a separate agency within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). President Biden had originally proposed that ARPA-H be established as an independent institute within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), but the House bill would establish the new agency as independent within HHS.

The bill now goes to the Senate for its consideration. Its fate in the Senate is unclear, as Senate HELP Committee Chair Patty Murray

(D-WA) and Ranking Member Richard Burr (R-NC) have both suggested in hearings this May, that they felt comfortable with ARPA-H being positioned within the NIH and reporting to HHS. Under the authorizing legislation, the President would nominate a Director, but would not require Senate confirmation.

An inter-agency committee would also be created in the bill to monitor the activity of ARPA-H, including the Directors of the NIH, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), DARPA, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and several other major research and health care agencies and offices. The committee, as proposed, would advise the Director on research priorities and offer recommendations on ways to improve coordination with other federal research agencies.

The authorizing legislation also included \$500 million in funding for ARPA-H per year from Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 through FY2027. Actual funding for ARPA-H would be set by the Appropriations committees in the annual Labor, Health, and Human Services (LHHS) appropriations bills. For FY2023, the House LHHS appropriations bill would currently fund ARPA-H at a level of \$2.75 billion.

