

Spilka: Health care reform still on Senate's to-do list

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Senate President Karen Spilka speaks during the American Nurses Association Massachusetts advocacy day on Tuesday, Sept. 30, 2025.

On the eve of October, Senate President Karen Spilka pegged health care reform as an upcoming priority for her branch, name-checking a sector that she pledged to focus on at the start of the session in January.

Spilka, speaking at an advocacy event hosted by American Nurses Association Massachusetts, said, "Health care reform remains on our radar and on our horizon for the coming months."

The president's comments come as the health care sector is strained on multiple

fronts, with patients unable to easily secure primary care appointments, costs rising at unaffordable rates, and analysts predicting that tens of thousands of people will lose access to health insurance under the federal One Big Beautiful Bill.

Spilka declined to provide specifics about where the Senate plans to take health care policy, telling the News Service that Health Care Financing Committee Co-chair Sen. Cindy Friedman is working on "several areas."

"She's spoken about primary care and other reforms," Spilka said. "We need to continue looking at health care strength, making sure it's strong here in Massachusetts. So we'll be looking at other areas, as well."

Spilka identified primary health care delivery reform as a priority on Jan. 1.

"I do feel that we are at a really important inflection point in health care in the commonwealth," Spilka told the News Service at the time. "I think that providers are having trouble and concerns insurance companies, formerly known as the carriers, are having trouble. Patients, clearly, are having concerns and trouble getting the care that they need."

A primary care task force is working on recommendations for setting a sector spending target, proposing payment models to boost public and private reimbursement, and creating workforce development plans. The task force faces various deadlines in December and next year to submit reports.

Spilka, asked whether the Senate would take action on primary care before the task force wraps up its work, said, "We'll have to see."

Spilka also declined to pinpoint when the Senate intends to tackle Cannabis Control Commission reform legislation. The House passed cannabis reform legislation on June 4, attaching some urgency to its plans. The spotlight at the conflict-riddled agency has intensified with Shannon O'Brien's return to the CCC.

"When we're ready," Spilka offered as a timeline. The House-approved bill is in Senate Ways and Means.