



Will Heidi Overton Be the Next FDA Commissioner? MAHA and Some Senators Say No

Recently [reports](#) emerged that President Donald Trump had nominated Dr. Heidi Overton, a physician who served as a White House fellow during Trump's first term and serves as deputy assistant to the president for domestic policy during his second term, to be the next commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Overton was present at the White House when Trump signed a controversial executive order recommending limits and changes to childhood vaccines.

Trump posted on [Truth Social](#) that Overton was a "ROCKSTAR in [his] Administration," "ALWAYS RIGHT," "known to take on the HARDEST issues, and bring [him] solutions that work best for the Country," and that "Dr. Heidi will work with Secretary Kennedy and Dr. Oz to RAPIDLY deliver on my priorities of FASTER Cures, INCREASED American Innovation, MAJOR Clinical Trial Reforms, LOWER Drug Prices, and even more MAHA [Make America Healthy Again] WINS!"

Outgoing Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, a physician and chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, [voiced concern](#) on X, formerly known as Twitter:

While I respect Dr. Overton's experience as a physician, I have strong concerns about her nomination to be FDA Commissioner. Her lack of managerial experience does not prepare her well for leading a large organization that is already dealing with staffing and morale issues. Additionally, Dr. Overton's active role in last week's nonsensical vaccine executive order calls into question her commitment to standing up for sound science and protecting children's health. That alone is almost disqualifying.

But a number of MAHA supporters [reportedly](#) oppose Overton for reasons beyond her stance on vaccines. Critics have cited her involvement with a February executive order promoting glyphosate, a widely used weedkiller that MAHA supporters argue is dangerous and carcinogenic, as a sign that she favors corporate interests over public health. Food advocates also seem concerned that Overton could interfere with FDA efforts to increase scrutiny of food additives.

Business intelligence and data provider [Citeline](#) hosted a [podcast](#) in which commentators discussed Overton's nomination and potential challenges she would need to overcome to be appointed as FDA commissioner. First, although she has the White House's trust and experience navigating political processes, it is unclear whether she can manage the FDA's approximately 18,000 career scientists, reviewers, and inspectors. Second, she would face intense policy questions, including the FDA's stance on mifepristone and abortion in light of her party's position, as well as the administration's support of peptide compounding – a regulatory gray area that FDA career scientists view skeptically because of safety concerns. Finally, Overton, or any nominee, would need to rebuild public trust in the FDA, a formidable task following [former FDA Commissioner Marty Makary's tenure](#).

Takeaways

Initial reactions to Overton's nomination suggest she will face challenges in the Senate, including reservations from influential Republicans, as well as opposition from some MAHA supporters who might otherwise have been expected to back her. Any nominee for FDA commissioner will face close scrutiny over difficult issues, including vaccines; abortion and access to mifepristone; food supply safety; the rapid growth of peptide compounding; and the use of pesticides such as glyphosate. The FDA's career workforce remains in flux, and hiring new talent has taken longer than anticipated. Strong leadership will be important – something Overton has not yet had an opportunity to demonstrate.

This blog was drafted by [Brian Malkin](#), co-lead of the Spencer Fane FDA Pharmaceutical and Biologics Market Team. For more information, visit [spencerfane.com](#).

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