

Trump picks pharmaceutical exec as new US health secretary

November 13 2017

US President Donald Trump, who harshly criticized pharmaceutical firms during his campaign, said Monday he has chosen an executive from the industry to be his new secretary of health.

"Happy to announce, I am nominating Alex Azar to be the next HHS Secretary. He will be a star for better healthcare and lower drug prices!" Trump said in a tweet.

Azar worked for a decade at Eli Lilly and Company and most recently headed the pharmaceutical giant's US operations.

He left in January 2017 and formed strategic consulting firm Seraphim Strategies, according to Azar's LinkedIn profile.

Azar also has high-level experience in the department he is being asked to head. He served as deputy [secretary](#) of the Department of Health and Human Services from 2005 to 2007 during the George W. Bush administration, and as its general counsel for the four years prior.

The nomination comes six weeks after Tom Price resigned as [health secretary](#) amid a scandal over his taxpayer-funded travel.

That departure left a hole in the Trump administration as it grappled with addressing a deadly opioid epidemic, and as Trump's Republicans failed to repeal and replace former president Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump routinely assailed big pharma companies. In January, shortly before his inauguration, the then-president-elect said companies in the drug industry were "getting away with murder" and that bidding procedures were inadequate.

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Citation: Trump picks pharmaceutical exec as new US health secretary (2017, November 13) retrieved 17 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-11-trump-pharmaceutical-exec-health-secretary.html>

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