

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

# DON'T CUT Medicare Advantage

## Seniors are clear. Medicare Advantage is Medicare. Don't Jeopardize Health Access for Seniors and People with Disabilities.

More than 60 Senators from both parties recently wrote to the U.S. Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services asserting that Congress backs Medicare Advantage. Just a few days later, however, the Administration proposed cuts to the program that could threaten benefits for Medicare Advantage enrollees.

Seniors and people with disabilities deserve affordable access to care – and for Washington to keep its promises to them.

President Biden's State of the Union Address highlighted his commitment to protecting Medicare, and his push to Republicans to affirm their support for Medicare resulted in a bipartisan show of support for the program. Now is not the time for Medicare cuts.

Nearly half of Medicare recipients, more than 30 million seniors and people with disabilities, benefit from the coverage and care provided by Medicare Advantage. Medicare Advantage **is** Medicare.

**Here is what policymakers, industry leaders and seniors are saying about the proposed changes to Medicare Advantage that would materialize in the form of fewer benefits and higher out-of-pocket costs:**

## WTAS: Policymakers

### Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NM) said:

"I'm confident the White House understands this, given their proposal, and look forward to working together to make sure Medicare Advantage can continue to meet patients' health care needs."

**Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV) tweeted:** "Medicare Advantage is a lifeline for hundreds of thousands of Nevadans, providing quality health care to seniors and individuals with disabilities. I joined @SenCortezMasto in calling on the Biden Administration to continue support for this vital program."

**Senator Katie Britt (R-AL) said:** "It is crucial that we meet our obligations to the hardworking families and retirees who have paid into Social Security and Medicare their entire careers. Over half of all Alabamians who are eligible for Medicare choose Medicare Advantage."

**Senator Tom Cotton (R-AK) tweeted:** "It's President Biden who is proposing to cut Medicare Advantage, a program used by almost 4 in 10 Arkansas seniors."

**Senator Steve Daines (R-MT) tweeted:** "I'm urging the @JoeBiden admin to protect Montanans' access to Medicare Advantage. 25% of Montanans, as well as millions of seniors & disabled Americans across the US, rely on this program. They should be allowed to choose a plan that works for them."

"The number of Americans who choose Medicare Advantage continues to grow each year, with enrollment doubling over the last decade, resulting in Medicare Advantage serving nearly 50 percent of individuals eligible for Medicare," wrote a bipartisan group of more than 60 Senators. "In 2023, average Medicare Advantage premiums will fall to a 16-year low of \$18 per month and beneficiaries will have access to vital financial protections, including out-of-pocket spending limits and often prescription drug coverage for no additional premium."

**Representative Vern Buchanan (R-FL) [tweeted](#):**

“Newsflash: President Biden is cutting Medicare, not Republicans... I just cosponsored @RepDLesko’s legislation reaffirming my commitment to these vitally important programs.”

**Representative Robert Aderholt (R-AL) [tweeted](#):** “Biden just cut Medicare Advantage. The Democrats want to either raise taxes to pay for Medicare and Social Security or they want to do nothing which will mean cutting vital benefits. Both are WRONG.”

**Representative Brian Mast (R-FL) [blasted](#)** Biden for “a gross political lie. He’s the one who just cut billions from Medicare Advantage.”

**Representative Jessica Giannino (D-MA) [tweeted](#):** “Excited to learn that more than 30 million people rely on #MedicareAdvantage, including many in my district. @WhipKClark, together let’s make sure it remains an option.”

**Representative Kevin Hern (R-OK) [tweeted](#):** “Mr. President, let me remind you: you just cut billions from Medicare Advantage.”

**Representative Randy Feenstra (R-IA) [said](#):** “According to a notice from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Biden administration has proposed an average 2.3 percent payment cut to Medicare Advantage, which would slash more than \$4.7 billion from this vital program that serves over 30 million American seniors.”

**Republican Members of the Senate Finance Committee [said](#):** “For more than 25 years, MA has enabled Medicare beneficiaries to select health plans that best suit their budget and health needs. As we continue working to strengthen the program, we should focus our efforts on advancing care quality, efficiency, affordability and patient choice. While we understand, and in some cases support, the intent of the proposed changes, we are concerned that certain reforms included in the CY 2024 Advance Notice stray from these core priorities.”

## WTAS: Industry Leaders

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**Mary Beth Donahue, President and CEO of the Better Medicare Alliance [said](#):** “Medicare Advantage is Medicare. Those are 30 million seniors who will ultimately see higher premiums and a negative impact on their benefits.”

**Elena Rios, President and CEO of the National Hispanic Medical Association [said](#):** “There are about 5 million Hispanics that are in Medicare – 53% of those are in MA. More than half. Why? The major reason is that it’s a lower-cost option than Medicare.”

**Doug Holz-Eakin, President, American Action Forum [said](#):** “... conditions that were recognized as making a senior sicker in 2023 will not be recognized in 2024. The change gets rid of codes like those for pre-diabetes and other early-onset conditions. Budgetarily this is tantamount to saying: ‘We gave you enough to cover these ailing seniors last year, but no longer.’ From a health policy view, it removes the incentive to identify affected seniors early and arrest the deterioration of their health.”

“The administration is proposing Medicare cuts, SOTU histrionics notwithstanding. ... If this were a legislative proposal, it would be characterized as a cut of \$150 billion over 10 years. That is real money.”

**Karyne Jones, President and CEO of the National Caucus of Black Aging [said](#):** “Today, roughly half of Black seniors are enrolled in Medicare Advantage, a number that has accelerated in recent years. And these plans are working. Medicare Advantage enrollees were more likely than those in traditional Medicare to report having a usual source of care. They were also more likely to receive preventive care services, such as annual wellness visits and routine checkups, screenings, and vaccines.”





**Matt Eyles, President and CEO of AHIP said:** “With more than 30 million seniors and people with disabilities now enrolled in Medicare Advantage – nearly half of all who are eligible for Medicare – it is a huge endorsement of the value of this program. This milestone shows that people are choosing MA for better affordability and health outcomes. The continued growth of the program is a testament to the tremendous value MA offers to all enrollees, and especially those with chronic illnesses who require care coordination and management, as well as those with low incomes who rely on MA’s access to additional benefits at little or no cost.”

**Judy Schmidt, President of the New Jersey Nurses Association said:** “Now is not the time for the government to make it more difficult for health care providers to treat our highly vulnerable senior population. Medicare Advantage is frequently one of the only affordable options for many seniors to afford comprehensive care. Decreasing funding could result in increased costs for enrollees, pricing some seniors out of the coverage that they rely on and leaving them struggling to get the care they need.”

**Heather Ross, Arizona Nurses Association said:** “We believe cutting funding from Medicare Advantage will only harm a popular program that is empowering providers to deliver better care to our patients, while improving health care outcomes among clinically-complex patient populations. The Arizona Nurses Association urges President Biden and CMS to reverse their planned cuts so that 30 million American seniors and people with disabilities – including more than 676,000 Arizonans – can continue receiving the health care on which they rely.”

**Elena Rios, National Hispanic Medical Association, Joy Calloway, National Medical Association, Juliet Choi, Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum said:** “The changes CMS proposes in the CY 2024 Advance Notice threatens the advancements and achievements made over the last decade that could disproportionately impact the very populations CMS seeks to protect and support...we encourage CMS to work with all stakeholders to assess the impacts these proposals will have on beneficiaries, especially vulnerable population whose needs are best served by the coordinated care models under Medicare Advantage. Any proposals finalized for future implementation based on a thorough review of stakeholder input should be phased in over multiple years to maintain program stability for beneficiaries.”

## WTAS: Seniors

**Kevin Boozel, *Butler Eagle* said:** “Medicare Advantage is a tremendous option for those who live on a fixed income and are stressed about keeping out-of-pocket costs at a minimum.”

**Judith Burks, *Raleigh, North Carolina* said:** “As I continue into my senior years, I realize how important it is to center health and wellness in my day-to-day life. I feel so lucky to have amazing benefits and security with my Medicare Advantage plan that help me stay healthy.”

**Josephine Glynn, *Methuen, Massachusetts* said:** “One of the largest hassles is a shortage of healthcare professionals, causing a series of issues for patients including longer travel times, out-of-network visits, and higher costs to name a few. For many, these obstacles force older patients to put off care, often leading to declining health. For me, Medicare Advantage has proven to be a viable solution, with a range of benefits that are geared directly toward people in less populated areas. For starters, they offer telehealth services that offers another layer of options to access quality care without having to go into Boston. Additionally, I have access to virtual wellness programs and fitness classes that I otherwise wouldn't have had the opportunity to attend. Enrolling in Medicare Advantage has positioned me to have the highest level of care, no matter where I live. As I continue to age, I can have confidence that instead of being overlooked, I am prioritized. That means something to me and to my family.”

**Freda Lindley, *Apache Junction, Arizona* said:** “January is a time when people resolve to be the healthiest version of themselves. That's possible for Medicare Advantage seniors, like me, who have access to a full range of wellness services like fitness programs, nutrition planning, mental health resources, and more. If I don't feel like commuting, I can even participate in virtual fitness classes or receive telehealth services from my own home. My Medicare Advantage plan provides all of this with zero premiums. Best of all, I get peace of mind. Here's one more wish for 2023: I hope our leaders in Washington protect Medicare Advantage for me and the nearly 600,000 Arizona seniors who depend on it.”

**Diane Bandake, *Delaware News Journal* said:** “Medicare Advantage offers an abundance of services that have kept me healthy and enjoying my older years... Without the comprehensive coverage I've received through Medicare Advantage, I might not be healthy enough right now to play card games or walk around the block with my newfound friends.”

**Tanya Shively, *Corvallis Gazette-Times* said:** “Prior to his passing, my husband had several hospital stays. The last thing anyone should have to worry about during times of health scares or mourning are financial bills. I am so grateful that because I had the security of our coverage through Medicare Advantage, I was able to focus on being with him instead of worrying about whether his medical bills would be covered.”

**Jon Stetson, *Arizona Daily Star*, said:** “Medicare Advantage is an investment that we seniors have earned. I urge the Biden administration and our federal representatives to continue supporting this important program.”

