

To: Better Medicare Alliance  
From: The Winston Group  
Re: Key Findings From National Survey

This memo is based on findings from a national survey of 1,000 registered voters, with an oversample of 800 seniors, conducted April 28-May 1, 2025.

## Priorities For Health Care Spending

**Voters believe the federal government's priority for health care spending should be *keeping people healthy and out of the hospital, even if it costs more to the federal government (62%) over treating patients if a patient is sick, keeping those costs down for the federal government (30%)*.** Even with their interest in finding savings in federal spending, Republican voters prioritize keeping people healthy and out of the hospital (61-33). This is also the case among independents (60-29) and Democrats (66-28).

Voters make the connection between chronic disease and higher health care costs (*Patients with chronic health conditions like diabetes and heart disease have higher health care costs than patients who do not have those conditions, 84-9 believe-do not believe*). They also understand the connection between better health and lower costs: *The healthier that a person is, the less that person costs in the health care system; 73-18 believe-do not believe*). This statement is believed across party (75% of Republicans believe; 76% of independents; 69% of Democrats).

By about 3:1, voters see the greater contributor to health care costs as *health conditions that go untreated or undiagnosed and turn into serious illnesses (70%)* rather than too many tests and treatments (23%).

**Voters agree that *Medicare Advantage is helping to modernize the health care system by including telehealth benefits, in-home care and promoting wellness to keep people as healthy as possible* (65-15 agree-disagree).**

## Federal Support For Medicare Advantage

There is support for the administration's recent announcement of increased funding for Medicare Advantage. Almost 7 out of 10 voters (69%) support keeping the 2026 increased levels of funding for Medicare Advantage in place with only 15% favoring a proposal to reduce the funding.

Three of the most compelling statements for keeping the increased levels of funding in place related to benefits and health outcomes in the program:

- *99% of Medicare Advantage plans provide dental, vision or hearing benefits not available in original Medicare. (78-16 compelling-not compelling)*
- *Seniors in Medicare Advantage have been shown to have better health outcomes with chronic diseases like diabetes, as they are more likely to regularly check blood sugar and blood pressure (76-16 compelling-not compelling).*
- *Data shows seniors in Medicare Advantage had a 43% lower rate of avoidable hospitalizations than seniors in original Medicare (72-18 compelling-not compelling).*

## Policy Approaches To Address Payment Accuracy

Although there is concern about payment accuracy in Medicare Advantage, the idea that Medicare Advantage plans are deliberately making patients appear sicker to drive up costs is not believed, including among Republican voters. ***(Medicare Advantage plans try to make patients appear sicker than they are to drive up costs and increase reimbursement (28-55 believe-do not believe).*** This included Republicans, 32-50; independents, 27-53; and Democrats, 25-62. Seniors in Medicare Advantage were particularly negative in their reaction to this statement (6-81).

To address fraud and potential overpayments, voters overall — including Republicans — prefer a policy approach of incorporating existing safeguards in the Medicare Advantage program, including auditing, oversight and strict documentation over other policy changes to Medicare Advantage payments. The research explored three policy variations.

### Auditing/Regulatory Standards vs. Proposal To Restrict Medical Information For Payments

Better approach to preventing fraud and overpayments in Medicare Advantage?	Overall	GOP	Ind	Dem	65+ MA
Auditing, accountability mechanisms, strict documentation, government oversight and regulation of Medicare Advantage payments	59	62	57	56	69
Policy changes made by Congress to create new limits and guidelines for the types of medical information that can be used to assess a patient's health that determines their health risk and the cost of care	28	28	28	28	14

In the first policy contrast, existing auditing and regulatory standards beat the proposal to create new limits and guidelines for determining health risk and cost of care by 2:1 (59-28) with a larger margin among Medicare Advantage seniors (69-14). Republican voters preferred the existing regulatory approach of auditing, accountability mechanisms and strict documentation over the alternative payments proposal by more than 2:1 (62-28).

### Auditing/Regulatory Standards vs. Medicare Advantage Payment Reduction

Better approach to preventing fraud and overpayments in Medicare Advantage?	Overall	GOP	Ind	Dem	65+ MA
Auditing, accountability mechanisms, strict documentation, government oversight and regulation of Medicare Advantage payments	63	68	62	59	75
Reduce payments to Medicare Advantage for patients diagnosed as higher risk that have more expensive cost of care. This would make the payments to Medicare Advantage more aligned with payments in original Medicare	25	24	23	28	10

In the second contrast, the current auditing approach was preferred over the alternative proposal to reduce Medicare Advantage payments for higher risk patients by 63-25, and among Medicare Advantage seniors, 75-10.

## In-Home Assessment Accountability Proposal vs. In-Home Restrictions

Better approach to preventing fraud and overpayments in Medicare Advantage?	Overall	GOP	Ind	Dem	65+ MA
Increase accountability of in-home health care through additional auditing, documentation, oversight and mandated follow-up care with primary care physicians	72	73	72	69	74
Prohibit diagnoses from in-home health assessments performed by licensed clinicians for the purpose of determining payments in Medicare Advantage	17	19	14	17	13

As a preferred approach for preventing fraud and overpayments, a proposal to increase accountability of in-home health assessments with more oversight and mandated follow-up care outperformed the proposed restrictions to in-home health assessments 72-17, and among Medicare Advantage seniors, 74-13. As shown in the chart, there was support for the in-home assessment accountability proposal among voters across the board.

### Implications For Medicare Advantage Policy Changes

**Voters believe that a cut to Medicare Advantage is a cut to Medicare (63-24 agree-disagree), with an even higher percentage of Medicare Advantage seniors agreeing with this (72-15).** This statement was believed by voters across the board.

There is widespread agreement that *Congress should only consider policy changes to Medicare Advantage payments if they can guarantee the changes will not lead to cuts in benefits or higher costs to beneficiaries* (79-11 agree-disagree overall). Republican voters also agree with this statement 79-11.

In light of support for the Trump administration's increased funding for Medicare Advantage in 2026, voters would consider Congressional changes to Medicare Advantage payments that result in higher costs or benefit cuts to be a cut to Medicare (56-28 would-would not consider this a cut to Medicare, 16% don't know). Seniors would consider this result to be a cut to Medicare 60-24, with an even higher margin among Medicare Advantage seniors 74-14.

There is concern about including Medicare Advantage proposals as pay-for items: *The estimated savings from the policy proposals to change the way Medicare Advantage payments are determined would be used to pay for other legislative items in a larger legislative bill that includes tax and spending cuts.* Voters tend to oppose this idea (34-45 favor-oppose) with seniors opposed 23-56 and Medicare Advantage seniors opposed 17-64.

### Consequences of Cuts To Medicare Advantage

**Across the board, voters recognize the consequences of cuts to Medicare Advantage.**

- Seven out of ten voters (72%) and 69% of Republicans agree that *if the federal government cuts funding for Medicare Advantage plans, seniors in Medicare Advantage will face higher premiums and out of pocket costs.* This result is higher among Medicare Advantage seniors (88-5).
- Similarly, 70% of voters overall and 65% of Republicans agree that *if the federal government cuts funding for Medicare Advantage plans, seniors in Medicare Advantage will lose important benefits they count on today.* Medicare Advantage seniors agree with this statement 86-6.