SENATE BILL REPORT
SJM 8002

As Passed Senate, January 28, 2026

Brief Description: Concerning Medicare.

Sponsors: Senators Hasegawa, Chapman, Stanford, Trudeau and Valdez.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/11/25, 2/13/25 [DP, DNP, w/oRec].
Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 3/10/25, 30-19; 1/28/26, 49-0.

Brief Summary of Joint Memorial

- Requests the federal government to take certain actions so that Medicare beneficiaries will not suffer additional costs from choosing original Medicare and will have a choice between the public and private program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.
Signed by Senators Cleveland, Chair; Orwall, Vice Chair; Bateman, Chapman, Riccelli and Slatter.

Minority Report: Do not pass.
Signed by Senators Muzzall, Ranking Member; Christian, Harris and Holy.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.
Signed by Senator Robinson.

Staff: Julie Tran (786-7283)

Background: Medicare is a federal health insurance program covering individuals 65 years of age or older and younger individuals with certain disabilities. Individuals enrolling in

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Medicare may enroll in original Medicare, which is administered by the federal government, or Medicare Advantage Program, which is administered by private insurers.

Both original Medicare and Medicare Advantage are regulated almost exclusively by federal law, which preempts state law in this area.

Summary of Joint Memorial: The Legislature makes various findings regarding Medicare and states its opposition to Medicare privatization.

The Legislature requests the federal government to level the playing field between original Medicare and Medicare Advantage so that Medicare beneficiaries will not suffer additional costs by enrolling in original Medicare and will have a genuine choice between the public and private program as a step toward health care equity. To that end, the Legislature asks the federal government to:

- eliminate the original Medicare 20 percent copays and setting an out-of-pocket cap on medical expenses;
- add benefits to original Medicare such as dental, vision, and hearing coverage as is permitted in Medicare Advantage plans;
- eliminate the allowed excessive administrative costs and profits in the Medicare Advantage program; and
- recoup funds for the Medicare Trust Fund from the Medicare Advantage overpayments, fraud, and abuse to support a robust original Medicare system that will lower costs and improve benefits, access, and equity for all seniors and disabled beneficiaries.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Medicare is a vital part of retirement security and it's a benefit that people all help to fund. This Senate Joint Memorial (SJM) is budget neutral and there should be a level playing field between the public and private Medicare programs. There needs to be action to strengthen the Original Medicare system as there is so much fraud from these private entities to provide these programs. It is important to remove the overcharging of the Medicare system and allowing Medicare beneficiaries a real choice about which program that they would prefer. Privatized Medicare Advantage plans are not well-suited for older retirees. Medigap policies are a barrier to lower income seniors. Leveling the playing the field would create equity for patients and provide financial stability for rural hospitals. Pass this SJM and continue honoring Medicare as the public good it was created and maintain the tradition of Medicare as the lowest cost and most effect health care program in the U.S.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Bob Hasegawa, Prime Sponsor; Ed Weisbart MD, Retired Family Physician and Board Chair, Physicians for a National Health Program; Karen Richter, Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action, Co-President; Anne Watanabe; Ellen Menshew; Laurie Weidner, Retired Public Employees Council of WA; Kathryn Lewandowsky.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.