

Trump HHS Halts Biden Medicare Program to Improve Hospices

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- Hospice Special Focus Program is target of industry lawsuit
- Trade groups, lawmakers take issue with program's algorithm

The Trump administration Friday "ceased" implementation for 2025 of a disputed Biden administration program designed to remediate poor-performing hospices until it can be evaluated further.

Authorized by Congress, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' [Hospice Special Focus Program](#), which launched in December 2024, was designed to monitor poor-performing hospices based on a number of quality measures.

Hospice providers selected for the program faced enhanced oversight to facilitate improvement, like inspections every six months instead of every three years. Program enforcement actions can include fines, suspended reimbursements, and termination from the Medicare program.

The agency decision to pause the program was made public in a brief statement on the CMS' website.

The move was hailed in a [joint statement](#) from the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation and the National Alliance for Care at Home.

"This decision is a positive move acknowledging that the current approach is not working as intended," the groups said. "The hospice community has long advocated for strong oversight and patient protections, but the SFP, as implemented, was deeply flawed, unlawful, and harmful to the very patients it was meant to protect."

Four state hospice industry associations recently filed a [lawsuit](#) over the program, and a number of lawmakers from both sides of the aisle criticized the program's algorithm used to select the program's initial 50 poor-performing providers.

The associations and lawmakers had urged the CMS to revamp the algorithm, which they claimed did not meet the congressional intent of the program and could ensnare quality hospices instead of the noncompliant providers it was supposed to target.

'Failed Miserably'

For the program to succeed, "good execution is critical," but the "CMS has failed miserably," said a statement issued Friday evening by Katie Smith Sloan, president and

CEO of LeadingAge, which represents nonprofit aging services providers, including hospices.

The CMS' "decision today to cease implementation of the program" for further review "follows years of advocacy in which we urged CMS to revise its approach, coupled with more recent legal pressure," Smith Sloan said. "It is a significant win for all providers, and for all Americans seeking quality hospice care."

over the program seeks to set aside the rule that finalized the program and to block the program's implementation.

Filed in the US District Court for the Southern District of Texas, the complaint claims the CMS unlawfully exceeded its statutory authority and violated the Administrative Procedure Act by finalizing the program.

The Trump administration had not filed a response to the suit prior to its action Friday to pause the program.

"The flawed algorithm behind the SFP failed to distinguish fraudulent providers from reputable ones, disproportionately penalized well-established hospices, and ignored repeated warnings from congressional leaders and industry stakeholders. Despite these concerns, CMS moved forward, forcing providers to act in defense of patient care," said the statement from the two industry groups.

Lawmakers, equally concerned about the program and its algorithm, introduced [H.R. 10097](#), the Enhancing Hospice Oversight and Transparency Act, in the last Congress. It called for delaying the program launch until 2027, providing time to revise the algorithm.

More than 6,500 Medicare-certified hospices were paid \$25.7 billion to serve 1.7 million Medicare beneficiaries in 2023, the Medicare Payment advisory Commission reported.