

FIRST IN PULSE: NEW MA CAMPAIGN — Medicare Advantage advocacy group Better Medicare Alliance launched new digital ads today as part of its seven-figure campaign to bolster federal funding for the private plans, Kelly reports.

The new ads, which will run on internet-connected TV and streaming services, highlight the stories of seniors “who are deeply concerned about a proposed federal payment rate that threatens to erode that kind of protection for millions of Medicare Advantage beneficiaries,” BMA said in a press release.

Why it matters: The ad blitz is the latest effort by the Medicare Advantage industry to pressure the Trump administration to boost federal payments to the plans in 2027. Insurers were disappointed with CMS’s proposed 0.09 percent increase and have argued that the modest bump will force the companies to reduce seniors’ benefits and raise costs.

BMA and major Medicare Advantage insurers have said the roughly \$700 million boost amounts to a cut to the program, leading to soaring medical costs for older Americans. At a BMA event a few weeks ago, Medicare Director **Chris Klomp** defended the Trump administration’s proposal, noting that CMS cares about stability in MA, but plans must “wrestle with cost” and ensure they’re “deploying services to their highest and best use for the good of the beneficiary.”

Key context: In the new digital ads, Medicare Advantage enrollee **Kathy Bandstra** of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, appeals directly to CMS Administrator **Mehmet Oz**, a longtime Medicare Advantage proponent, “to fully fund Medicare Advantage.”

Insurers had hoped that the agency would propose a more favorable boost to the program for next year, especially after the Trump administration finalized a roughly \$25 billion bump for 2026. Health policy experts have suggested the more modest 2027 proposal is a response to estimates that the government overpays MA plans by tens of billions of dollars a year.

“Dr. Oz, we need your help and your support today,” says Bandstra, who describes in the ads facing an \$81,000 medical bill after suffering a fall and needing hip replacement surgery. Her Medicare Advantage plan covered most of the bill, leaving her to pay less than \$2,000, she says in the ad.

What’s next: The industry is expected to continue its push to secure a higher rate before CMS releases its final notice, likely in early April. The agency often makes small changes between the proposal and the final rule.