

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [ETF SMB Board Feedback](#)  
**Subject:** Cost of United Healthcare Medicare PPO  
**Date:** Thursday, October 24, 2024 10:09:45 AM

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I would like to voice my concerns about the cost of the United Healthcare PPO plan offered by ETF. I understand that everything is going up in price but I did not expect it to be such a big raise in price.

It is a good plan but with research and talking with people, it appears that I could get a comparable policy for much less money. I hope that you will consider, in the future, that retirees are making the least amount of money, and it seems to be costing us more to live. I was a clerical worker for the UW system, so my retirement amount is not that high. I carry the insurance for myself and husband.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Kathleen Svoboda  
Retired State Employee



**STATE OF WISCONSIN**  
**Department of Employee Trust Funds**  
A. John Voelker  
SECRETARY

Wisconsin Department  
of Employee Trust Funds  
PO Box 7931  
Madison WI 53707-7931  
1-877-533-5020 (toll free)  
Fax 608-267-4549  
etf.wi.gov

November 4, 2024

Kathleen Svoboda  
[REDACTED]

Dear Kathleen Svoboda:

Thank you for your October 24, 2024, email to the Group Insurance Board (Board) and the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) regarding your concern about the increase in health insurance premium rates in UnitedHealthcare's (UHC's) It's Your Choice (IYC) Medicare Advantage plan offered in the State of Wisconsin Group Health Insurance Program (GHIP).

The Board and ETF share your concerns about the rising cost of health insurance and how it impacts employees and retirees. We work to limit premium increases in part by making sure health plans submit rates that are justified by their claims experience. Further, note that the contract for IYC Medicare Advantage is out to bid currently through a Request for Proposal. A new vendor may be selected for coverage effective January 1, 2026.

An element that affected UHC's IYC Medicare Advantage premium increase this year was how much Medicare paid as a subsidy to Medicare Advantage plans like UHC. Subsidies are determined based upon how a plan scores on Medicare's annual five-star rating scale. The IYC Medicare Advantage plan has always scored either 4.5 or 5 stars, which results in the highest amount of subsidy.

We monitor the news about Medicare Advantage policies nationwide. Over the past year or more, Medicare has heard member complaints about troubling practices such as denials of care following a prior authorization request where such care would be payable under traditional Medicare. Further, they have audited Medicare Advantage payments and found that some claim submissions have been up coded, for example, they found that some plans performed data mining into individual medical records submitted after an office visit, and had items added to them to receive more in payments from Medicare. This practice, long-term, could jeopardize the viability of the Medicare program. They have issued rules and made other adjustments to address concerns. In addition, effective in 2025, CMS somewhat reduced subsidies to Medicare Advantage plans. Due to this subsidy reduction, UHC and other plans are passing the cost that was paid by Medicare to their members.

I hope you have found this response helpful. If you have additional questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out using the contact information provided below. A copy of your letter and ETF's response will be included in the materials for the November 13, 2024, Board meeting.

Sincerely,

Arlene Larson, Federal Program and Policy Manager  
Office of Strategic Health Policy  
Department of Employee Trust Funds  
[arlene.larson@etf.wi.gov](mailto:arlene.larson@etf.wi.gov)  
608-264-6624

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [ETF SMB Board Feedback](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Cost of United Healthcare Medicare PPO  
**Date:** Thursday, January 16, 2025 8:50:41 AM

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Dear Arlene:

Thank you for your response to my email. Just noticed that UnitedHealthcare has been chosen for the Medicare Advantage plan for 2026. I do hope that the cost of this plan will come down for 2026. As I stated before, it is a good plan but such a rise in cost can be a burden on those of us who were paid the least.

Thanks again for your help.

Kathy Svoboda

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**From:** ETF SMB Board Feedback <ETFSMBBoardFeedback@etf.wi.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 12, 2024 7:43 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Cost of United Healthcare Medicare PPO

Dear Kathleen Svoboda:

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Arlene Larson, Federal Program and Policy Manager  
Office of Strategic Health Policy  
Department of Employee Trust Funds  
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