



## OCTOBER 2024 Newsletter

### Healthcare And the Presidential Election

According to a recent [Gallup Poll](#), Americans want more attention paid to lowering healthcare costs, an issue that has not had as much visibility in this presidential campaign compared with previous ones. This is especially true for Americans aged 65 and older. Majorities of older Republicans and older Democrats say a candidate's plan for protecting Medicare and Social Security is crucial to their vote choice.

The 65 and older population is a significant voting bloc in the U.S. In 2020, the population of Americans 65 and older reached a high of 55.8 million, accounting for roughly 17% of the population. That number is likely larger today, as the U.S. Census Bureau estimates by 2025, the 65+ population will reach 63.3 million.

Although other political issues may be overshadowing healthcare in the current election, Americans continue to have serious concerns about their ability to afford the healthcare they need. Data from this study show that more than two in three Americans (67%) are very or somewhat concerned that a major health event could lead to medical debt, including 62% of Republicans, 67% of independents and 71% of Democrats. Issues related to the cost and accessibility of healthcare directly impact the day-to-day life of every voter, regardless of their political party affiliation.

See Kamala Harris' position on healthcare: [Issues - Kamala Harris for President: Official Campaign Website](#)

See Donald Trump's position on healthcare: <https://rncplatform.donaldjtrump.com>

### ECOH In the News

ECOH president Eileen McAnney wrote an op-ed that was recently featured in [Commonwealth Beacon News](#). The opinion piece focused on the need for more accountability and transparency in hospital finances given the large amount of public subsidy provided to hospitals in Massachusetts. You can find the article [here](#).

### Annual Health Care Cost Trend Hearing – November 14, 2024

The Massachusetts Health Policy Commission (HPC) will once again host its all day hearing at which various healthcare stakeholders will testify under oath about healthcare costs and other trends affecting affordability. ECOH plans to submit testimony on behalf of supporters and encourages individual businesses to offer testimony highlighting how rising healthcare costs are impacting your businesses.

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# 2024 ANNUAL HEALTH CARE COST TRENDS HEARING

From Crisis to Stability: The Path to a More  
Affordable, Accessible, and Equitable Health Care System

9:00 AM on Thursday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Suffolk University Law School  
120 Tremont Street, Boston

Register:

[tinyurl.com/HPCCTH24](https://tinyurl.com/HPCCTH24)

Read the 2024 Annual Health Care Cost Trends Report and Policy Recommendations [here](#).

## Did You Know??

1. The Health Policy Commission found that **total annual health care expenditures per Massachusetts resident grew 5.8 percent in 2022, from \$9,700 to more than \$10,264**. Across all categories of care, the dominant factor driving this growth was higher prices, not more care being provided.
2. Massachusetts has the second highest family health insurance premiums in the country – including out of pocket spending. **The average annual cost of health care for a family exceeds \$29,000.**
3. The number of Massachusetts privately insured residents who did not get needed health care due to cost increased from 600,000 to 900,000 from 2021 to 2023.
4. The cost of employer-provided health insurance, which rose 7% in 2024 for a second straight year, is likely to rise again. Companies' total health-benefit cost for an employee is expected to increase an average of 5.8% in 2025, according to a WSJ article.
5. The biggest spending increases per enrollee from 2019 to 2022 – of about 8% – were seen in prescription drugs and hospital outpatient services.
6. Prescription drugs (including those administered by clinicians) accounted for almost one-quarter of total commercial health spending.
7. Average prices for a variety of common hospital services were generally twice as high in higher-cost than in lower-cost hospitals. Service intensity also contributed to increased inpatient and outpatient spending.

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8. The single largest tax expenditure benefit for employers and employees in the United States is for employer-sponsored health insurance. Here's a link to the report: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/final-report-of-the-merged-market-advisory-council/download>.
9. The rise of the cost for hospital services exceeded the rise in the cost for college tuition and new cars.
10. Each year health-related spending grows in the United States. The National Health Expenditure (NHE) reached \$4.5 trillion in 2022 and accounted for 17.3 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

## ECOH Brainstorming Session Recap

To prepare for the next legislative session, ECOH hosted a forum on September 18<sup>th</sup> for supporters to discuss ideas for how to improve health care affordability and increase value for health insurance spending. While no final decisions were made, the group touched on several important topics, such as the merged market, the need for more transparency and accountability, having hospitals, pharmaceutical companies and pharmacy benefit managers be more accountable for their costs by having them participate in the annual cost trend hearings. These ideas and others will be considered for inclusion in legislation. It is not too late for you to have input. Please reach out to Eileen McAnney at [emcanneny@massecoh.org](mailto:emcanneny@massecoh.org) with your ideas on how to improve healthcare affordability.

## News of Interest In Case You Missed It...

- [Inside Steward Health Care: A Boston Globe Spotlight Team report](#)
- [Healthcare Spending Bill Calls for Bold Action](#)
- [Regulators See Stability Under Private Equity-Backed Physician Network](#)
- [How Undoing the Affordable Care Act Would Affect Americans' Health Care](#)
- [Making Health Care More Affordable](#)
- [Health Cost and Affordability Policy Issues and Trends to Watch in 2024](#)

## Legislative Update



Formal legislative sessions ended July 31<sup>st</sup>, but there is still a chance that the legislature could take up the pending healthcare bills this fall. In fact, action on one or more of the healthcare related bills still pending could occur any time between now and December 31<sup>st</sup>. Before healthcare legislation can advance, however, the conference committee would have to reach agreement on the differences between the House and Senate versions, and there has been no progress publicly reported to date. ECOH will update you on these matters and seek your input if they do advance.

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## Resources:

[Bill](#) reported from the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

House Ways and Means version of the [bill](#)

Link to the [legislation](#) that passed the House.

ECOH's [letter](#) to the House

Senate Ways and Means version of the [bill](#)

Link to the [legislation](#) that passed the Senate

ECOH's [letter](#) to the Senate.

ECOH [Letter](#) to Conference Committee members

ECOH [joint letter](#) with other organizations

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