



## MEDICARE FOR ALL

### Medicare for All's jobs problem

The big Democratic talking point has a big political weakness: It could wipe out thousands of jobs in places like Pittsburgh that have built their new economies on health care.



Scott Goldsmith for Politico Magazine

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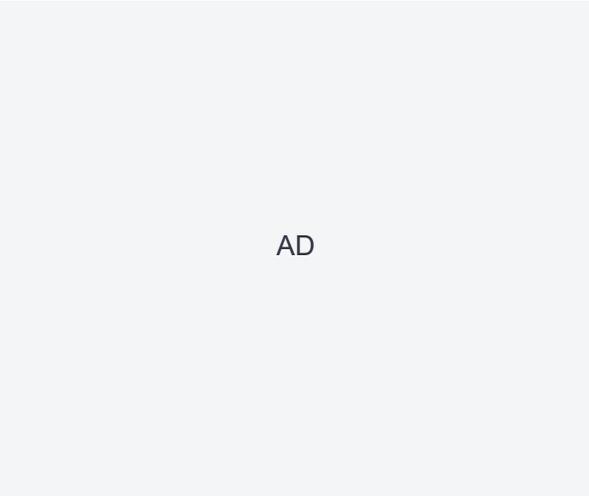


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**P**ITTSBURGH, Pa. — Deanna Mazur, the daughter of a retired steel mill worker who works as a medical billing manager, finds some things to like about the “Medicare for All” policy that she’s been hearing politicians talk about. She likes the notion that all Americans would have health insurance. And it would simplify her own job quite a bit if there were only one place to send medical bills, instead of the web of private companies and government programs that she deals with now. “It would definitely be easier,” Mazur says.

Then again, if it were that easy, her job might not exist at all.

*Story Continued Below*



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Mazur’s job and those of millions of others have helped turn health care into the largest sector of the nation’s economy, a multitrillion-dollar industry consisting in part of a huge network of payers, processors, and specialists in the complex world of making sure everything in the system gets paid for. If the health care system were actually restructured to eliminate private insurance, the way Medicare for All’s advocates ultimately envision it, a lot of people with

“What if my job doesn’t exist anymore?” she asked in a recent interview.



TOP: Deanna Mazur, a health care billing manager in Pittsburgh, wonders if her job might disappear if the country adopts a Medicare for All-style health care system. BOTTOM: The University of Pittsburgh



Pittsburgh's skyline includes the headquarters of its two major health care systems, Highmark and UPMC. | Scott Goldsmith for Politico Magazine

Medicare for All isn't predicted to disrupt all job types and could even potentially benefit certain types of health care workers – for example, by expanding the need for caregivers because of a proposed expansion of long-term care benefits. And Medicare for All would provide health benefits to tens of millions who are still uninsured, creating additional demand for doctors and other providers. Still, others are likely to be lost in the short term.

“We vilify the health care industry, but it provides jobs to a lot of people, and not just jobs for wealthy people but jobs for everyday people,” said Janette Dill, a researcher at the University of Minnesota who has studied the rise of health care-related employment among the working class. “That’s one thing it’s really good at.”

Health care jobs in Allegheny County, the region surrounding Pittsburgh, grew from roughly 90,000 in 1990 to around 140,000 this year, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. Another 9,500 people work directly for health insurance companies and about 3,200 work for insurance agencies or brokerages, which includes people who sell health insurance policies.

The power of the health care industry in southwestern Pennsylvania is inescapable. Hospitals and clinics controlled by two competing health care behemoths, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, dot Pittsburgh's streets. The two companies have slowly moved in on the other's territory and saturated Pittsburgh's health care market, with the iconic UPMC brand operating a health insurance arm, and Highmark BCBS running the Allegheny Health Network system of hospitals and clinics.

Both companies declined to comment on the potential impact of Medicare for All on their workforces.

University of Massachusetts researchers who analyzed the 2017 version of Sanders' Medicare for All bill estimated that nationwide more than 800,000

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