
Get Smart: Price transparency in healthcare

Over the past few years, the rising cost of healthcare has fueled worry for many Americans who are finding healthcare services increasingly inaccessible.¹ The public has been vocal about their concerns, so much so that the tensions around affordability of medical services have become the center of ongoing policy discussions, particularly when it comes to price transparency. Both Democrat and Republican policy leaders agree that ambiguity surrounding the cost of medical services is all too prominent. This sentiment is amplified by an increasing share of Americans who say they have put off seeking medical treatment because of high costs and are concerned about affording medical expenses such as unexpected bills and deductibles.²

While policymakers across the aisle can agree that more cost transparency is key, they are not aligned a solution. Some policy leaders say the onus is on companies to be more transparent – while others say legislation like the No Surprises Act³ are necessary for improving clarity. Despite the lack of consensus from policymakers – one thing remains clear: The American public overwhelmingly supports healthcare price transparency.



94% of Americans support healthcare price transparency



1 in 3 believe price transparency should be a top priority for Congress



93% agree hospitals should be required to provide prices in advance

Source: Marist Polling⁴



Costs are bloated, and they're not very transparent.

If I go to the doctor for a procedure, I'll pay a copay, but I don't really know how much that costs, right? I **don't really know unless I spent some time looking for it – how much my insurance paid for it, or how much the government subsidized of it.** From that perspective, it's kind of hard to know.

Former Legislative Staffer, U.S. House, R



I don't know if I expect my health insurance company to really be [promoting affordability]. **I would settle for price transparency and clear policies because it's very difficult for even people who are really educated to understand what is covered,** what is not covered.

Former Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Senate, D



I'm hearing a lot from other offices about payment transparency. The **No Surprises Act** went into effect, but I think **[only] 20% of hospitals are actually in compliance** in terms of the price transparency aspect of [the legislation].

Legislative Assistant, U.S. Senate, R



Why is an X-ray is cheap versus a CT scan? **[We need] transparency in terms of why a price is such.** We always see these horror stories of people getting a \$2000 bill. [Things like that] need to be streamlined. **It needs to be transparent and be as simple as possible for the everyday person.**

Former Senior Legislative Assistant, U.S. Senate, I



I think **pharmaceutical companies are charging unjustified prices.** I'm a big believer that the challenges and patent gaming and exclusivity are really significant in the ways that that happens. And I think pharmaceutical companies play the game **to be able to stay on the market by themselves for long periods of time and then they are able to charge whatever they want.**

Vice President, Private, D

Price transparency is a key healthcare priority for policymakers and the American public alike – particularly in a time when more than ever, Americans across the country are worried about their ability to afford medical care. Despite broad recognition from policy leaders that a solution is necessary, policymakers have varying views on what the solution is.

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Citations

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