

## Writing “Winning Words” for Single Payer

As a single-payer advocate, I frequently write letters to elected officials. Here are some guidelines that help me in this process. The text examples are extracted from a letter I wrote to my Congressman to support the Save Medicare Act, HR732.

**Homework.** First, it is helpful to do some “homework”. Scan the official website. Get a sense of the legislator’s priorities, where they generally stand on issues. Note the committees they serve on so you can point to a relationship between your issue and a committee. Check past votes on related bills. Call and ask to talk with the aide who covers the issue. They may provide valuable information, and this contact may start an ongoing relationship.

Here's the [link](#) to connect you with your state legislator’s website.

And here’s the [link](#) to find your member of Congress.

**Statement of purpose. This must be clear. If possible, find a creative way to introduce it.**

Check out websites of single-payer groups or surf YouTube and the internet for speeches or power points that may give you ideas for catchy openings and memorable metaphors. The following comes from a presentation by Dr. Ed Weisbart during the 2022 annual meeting of [Physicians for a National Health Program](#).

Here’s a riddle: Why is Medicare Advantage like “free ice cream”?

Medicare Advantage is supported by public subsidies, and so it can be offered in ways that may at first appear more economical than Traditional Medicare. As a result, some people opt for Medicare Advantage plans; it seems like a savvy consumer choice. Why pay when you can get it for free?

But this free ice cream isn’t popular because it’s better; it’s just because it’s free. At least, so says Don Berwick, former Administrator of CMS, when noting the popularity of Medicare Advantage, which now accounts for about one half of patients under Medicare.

But the truth is that the overall costs of Medicare Advantage turn out to be higher than Traditional Medicare— for the patient, the tax-paying public, and the Medicare trust fund. And significantly, there is no credible evidence that Medicare Advantage delivers better quality services than Traditional Medicare.

That is why we are contacting you once more about why privatization of Traditional Medicare needs to stop. In this letter, we review key information

revealing why that so yummy “free” ice cream isn’t really free at all. In fact, it is harmful to public health.

### **Never Assume the Reader Has the Background or Knows the Facts.**

HR732, the Save Medicare Act, has been introduced by Congressmen Mark Pocan and Ro Khanna to end fraudulent advertising by private health care plans. Congressman Khanna puts things bluntly: “Medicare Advantage is just private insurance that profits by denying coverage and the name is being used to trick seniors into enrolling.”

HR732 will rename the Medicare Advantage program, dropping “Medicare”; prohibit private insurers from using “Medicare” in plan titles or advertising; impose significant fines for any insurer that engages in this deceptive practice.

### **Summarize the Main Points.**

Medicare Advantage offers patients fewer choices than Traditional Medicare.

Medicare Advantage plans do not provide superior coverage.

Medicare Advantage costs the public more, and there have been allegations of widespread fraud.

### **State Precisely What is Being Asked**

We are asking you to become a co-sponsor of HR732 and to publicize that support, including on your website. We would also like to see you hold a ZOOM town hall meeting to share your support for this bill.

Collaborate with your fellow writers and have fun!

Jean Barstow

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