



The Daily Dish

Lessons from Harris' Medicare for All Plan

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Presidential hopeful Kamala Harris is in midst of a desperate re-branding effort. It is clear that merely inheriting the record of the Biden Administration is a non-starter. Bidenomics, with and without the branding, has been polling underwater for years. But where to go?

The current approach is a stealth policy portfolio, as witnessed by a campaign [website](#) that contains literally no hint of her priorities. And there is also the pure politics of simply matching bad Trump ideas – the poster child being no tax on tips. Alternatively, she could revert to her progressive instincts as evidenced by her 2019 primary policy proposals. Steve Parente and Theo Merkel took a look at her proposed [Medicare for All](#) and the implications are jaw-dropping. Certainly, the proposal would provide universal coverage – there is no need to sign up and no premiums or copays.

Of course, that means the taxpayers are picking up the entire tab, which Parente and Merkel estimate to increase federal spending by \$43.9 trillion between 2026 and 2035. That's, uh, enormous. Naturally, Harris did not detail how she would pay for this largesse. Using some clues from her and competing proposals by Senator Bernie Sanders, however, Parente and Merkel estimate that annual tax revenue could be expected to be about \$1.7 trillion, far short of the \$4.1 trillion in spending. Over the eight years of full implementation (2028 to 2035), the total net cost is \$24.1 trillion. That's, uh, still enormous.

But the dollars may not be the worst feature. The plan would decimate the health delivery system. They estimate that medical productivity would decline by 22 percent in 10 years “due to the massive increase of patients into the health system and the dissolution of network structure.” And among the massive increase in patients would be illegal immigrants. The Harris plan explicitly covers funding health insurance for all undocumented and illegal aliens residing in the United States.

So, in sum, an unrealistically gargantuan, federally financed program that destroys the underlying product but distributes it to even those here illegally. That is indefensible policy, on the merits. It is also not likely to be the policy that helps to capture key swing states.

The question then becomes: Can she suppress her progressive instincts and propose policies acceptable to moderate voters that take on the real entitlement and fiscal challenges facing the country? And, importantly, will voters believe her if she does?