

Modern Healthcare

Insurer-backed ‘Hospital Watch’ targets costs, consolidation

By Michael McAuliff March 05, 2026 05:00 AM CST

A health insurance industry-backed coalition is going after hospitals in a bid to capitalize on Washington’s bipartisan focus on affordability and rising healthcare costs.

Better Solutions for Healthcare launched its “Hospital Watch” campaign last month. The organization’s website links to news articles and data that are unflattering to the hospital sector. A banner on the home page reads, “Shining a Light on Corporate Hospital Systems’ Role in Driving America’s Healthcare Cost Crisis.”

The effort could prove well-timed. Over the past few years, Congress has focused on drug prices and [pharmacy benefit managers](#) — as has President Donald Trump — and on [health insurance premiums](#) and industry practices. Their attention may be shifting to providers.

Progressives such as Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) have long decried the consequences of healthcare mergers and acquisitions for patients and taxpayers. Lately, however, staunch conservative

Republicans such as Reps. Chip Roy (Texas) and Josh Brecheen (Okla.) increasingly offer similar criticisms.

There have also been growing calls, particularly from the right, to implement site-neutral Medicare payments for outpatient care and restrict the 340B Drug Pricing Program. Hospital critics argue those policy changes would reduce the incentives for health systems to consolidate.

Add to that the election-year gymnastics as both parties seek to capitalize on intense public pressure over affordability, and complaints about high-priced hospital care resonate.

“You cannot have a conversation about affordability without having a conversation about hospital costs,” said Adam Buckalew, the former Republican congressional aide who is leading Hospital Watch. “What we have seen is that when hospitals consolidate, their prices go up and the quality does not follow.”

Better Solutions for Healthcare describes itself as “An advocacy organization dedicated to bringing together employers, consumers and taxpayers to educate lawmakers on the rising cost of healthcare and provide ideas on how we can work together to find better solutions that lower healthcare costs for ALL Americans.”

The organization consists of the health insurance industry groups AHIP and the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association; the American Benefits Council, a coalition of large employers and insurance interests; the National Association of Benefits and Insurance Professionals, which represents brokers; the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions, a collection of

employers and other group health plan sponsors; and the Public Sector HealthCare Roundtable, which represents state and local government employee and retiree health plans.

The hospital sector opposes policies such as site-neutral payment and emphasizes that the industry is already beset by financial challenges that will worsen as the more than \$1 trillion in healthcare cuts from Trump's tax law begin to take effect.

"Though overall healthcare spending has increased recently, [the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services] noted in its recent national health expenditure report that growth has been driven primarily by non-price factors, including increased use and greater intensity of services — in other words, higher utilization and sicker patients," American Hospital Association President and CEO Rick Pollack said in a statement.

"The report from this group — whose members include corporate insurers — comes straight from a classic insurer playbook: Distract from their own denials and delays and ignore tremendous administrative burden by pointing fingers at the people actually caring for patients," Pollack said.

Pollack urged policymakers to reduce administrative burden on providers, curb prior authorizations and ease appeals of denied claims.

Another employer coalition, the Purchaser Business Group on Health, called out pricing discrepancies in outpatient care during a news conference last Thursday.

Dr. Raymond Tsai, the organization's vice president of advanced primary care, highlighted prices for colonoscopies in the Atlanta area, citing data from its member companies and from provider disclosures under healthcare pricing transparency laws.

"This shows more than a five times cost difference of getting a colonoscopy done for colon cancer screening only based off of where you're doing it, whether it's a hospital outpatient or an ambulatory surgical center," Tsai said. "This is sucking money for no good reason out of the pockets of Americans, and also out of businesses."

The Purchaser Business Group on Health also recommends that Congress ban health systems from insisting on all-or-nothing contracts with health plans that require insurers to accept entire systems into their provider networks.

House Budget Committee Chair Jodey Arrington (R-Texas) has sponsored legislation to that effect. In addition, the Justice Department and the state of Ohio sued Columbus-based OhioHealth last week over this practice.