

Healthcare Platforms of the Top Democratic Presidential Candidates: A Comparison

Healthcare remains a pressing concern for voters heading into the 2020 presidential election. Throughout the 2020 primary cycle, the leading Democratic candidates for president have put forward detailed policy proposals for expanding healthcare access and affordability. Now, two leading candidates remain: Senator Bernie Sanders and Vice President Joe Biden. While their healthcare platforms are similar in some areas, they differ in important respects.

The table below offers a broad overview of Sanders' and Biden's healthcare platforms, based on information drawn from the candidates' official campaign websites. As of March 3, 2020 (Super Tuesday), these two candidates have the highest national polling averages.

	<u>Senator Bernie Sanders</u>	<u>Vice President Joe Biden</u>
Coverage Expansion		
Insurance reform proposal	Creates a single-payer federal insurance program with comprehensive benefits for all US residents	Allows individuals to buy into a public health insurance program similar to Medicare while lowering the costs of private insurance by expanding premium subsidies and cost-sharing reductions
Expands Medicare-covered services	Yes	No
Maintains employer-sponsored insurance	No	Yes

	<u>Senator Bernie Sanders</u>	<u>Vice President Joe Biden</u>
Maintains private insurance	No	Yes
Caps insurance premiums	N/A	Yes – premiums capped at 8.5% of household income
Expands premium tax credits	N/A	Yes – eliminates the 400% income cap on tax credit eligibility and links tax credits to gold-level coverage
Caps out-of-pocket costs for healthcare services	N/A	No
Drug Pricing		
Authorizes Secretary of HHS to negotiate drug prices	Yes	Yes
Caps out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs	Yes – at \$200	No
Allows drug importation	Yes	Yes
Establishes an international reference price for drugs	Yes	Yes
Establishes an inflationary rebate	No	Yes
Mental Health and Substance Abuse		
Expands coverage for treatment and recovery services	Yes	Yes

	<u>Senator Bernie Sanders</u>	<u>Vice President Joe Biden</u>
Enforces mental health parity	Not specified	Yes
Rural Health		
Increases reimbursement for providers working in rural communities	Yes – increases funding for rural healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals, maternity wards, ambulance services and emergency departments	Yes
Increases funding for community health centers	Yes	Yes
Increases number of providers in rural areas	Yes – increases funding for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC)	Yes – establishes a grant program to help community health centers hire social workers to coordinate necessary resources, provides additional grants for the building of rural hospitals, and increases funding for the NHSC
Expands broadband/ telehealth services	Yes	Yes
Other		
Eliminates surprise billing	Yes	Yes
Financing mechanism	Pays for major healthcare provisions by eliminating health tax expenditure, removing capital gains tax loopholes, revising estate tax law and enacting an extreme wealth tax	Pays for major healthcare provisions by removing capital gains tax loopholes