

Boris Vabson, Ph.D.
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Bio: Boris Vabson, Ph.D. is a nationally recognized health economist, with expertise at the intersection of health care, business, analytics, data, and policy. He is currently a Scholar at the Paragon Health Institute. He was previously senior advisor for MA at CMS, leading all MA policy for CMMI and supporting MA strategy for the broader agency. He was previously a faculty member at Harvard Medical School, as well as a nonresident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and the University of Southern California's Schaeffer Center.

Through his work, Dr. Vabson examines major policy questions in Medicare and Medicaid, focusing on the ongoing privatization of these programs. His research has compared the performance of Medicare Advantage to Traditional Medicare along key policy relevant dimensions. He has also examined differences in performance within Medicare Advantage, across different types of MA plans, and identified the types of plan and payment designs delivering optimal outcomes. To support novel research designs and findings, Dr. Vabson leverages unique and highly detailed data, typically obtained through close partnerships with major healthcare entities.

Dr. Vabson has previously held academic appointments at Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley. He has also served as a strategic adviser to major health tech companies. His research has been published in peer-reviewed journals including *American Economic Review*, *AEJ: Economic Policy*, *Journal of Public Economics*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and *Health Affairs*. In addition, his work has been covered by *Bloomberg News*, the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and other major news outlets.

Dr. Vabson received an MS and PhD in applied economics from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and an AB in economics and mathematics from Dartmouth College.

Personal Information: US Citizen

Academic and Policy Appointments:

Scholar, Paragon Health Institute, 2026-
Senior Advisor & Head of CMMI MA Policy, CMS, 2025-2026
Faculty and Researcher, Harvard Medical School, 2019-2025
Nonresident Fellow, American Enterprise Institute, 2023-2025
Nonresident Fellow, University of Southern California-Schaeffer Center, 2023-2025

Previous Appointments:

Research Scholar, Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, 2017-2019
Post-Doctoral Fellow, UC-Berkeley Haas School, 2016-2017

Education:

Ph.D., M.S, Applied Economics, University of Pennsylvania-Wharton School, 2011-2016

A.B., Economics and Mathematics, Dartmouth College, 2005-2009
Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa, High Honors in Economics

Honors, Scholarships, and Fellowships:

2020- Co-Investigator, NIA P01 supplement for research on Medicare-Medicaid duals
2020- Co-Investigator, NIA P01, 'Improving Medicare in an Era of Change'

2020-	RDRC Pilot Grant for Research on Medicaid Long Term Care (co-PI)
2019	Finalist for 2019 NIHCM Prize
2017	NIA P01 Supplement for Research on Medicare Part D (Co-investigator)
2017	NIA Pilot Grant for Research on Medicaid Managed Care (co-PI with Tim Layton)
2013-2015	Pre-Doctoral Research Fellowship, NBER
2014	Leonard Davis Institute Pilot Grant
2013	Penn Trio Pilot Grant, Russell Ackoff Fellowship
2012	Amy Morse Prize (top 2 nd year PhD student in Applied Economics)
2011-2015	Wharton Doctoral Fellowship

Other Professional and Service Activities:

Academic Advisory Board: Arcadia Institute (former), Better Medicare Alliance (former)
Referee Service: Quarterly Journal of Economics, Journal of Political Economy, Journal of Public Economics, AEJ: Economic Policy, RAND Journal of Economics, AER: Insights

Economic Journal Articles:

Privatizing Social Insurance: Medicare Advantage vs Traditional Medicare (with Scott Bilder, Zarek Brot-Goldberg, Barton Jones, Iman Mohammadi, Zulkarnain Pulungan, Yalun Su, and Christie Teigland), *Revise and Resubmit, AEJ: Economic Policy*

Accompanying White Papers: [Enrollment Characteristics](#), [Utilization](#), [Quality](#), [Plan Design Within MA](#)

[Rationing Medicine Through Paperwork: Authorization Restrictions in Medicare Part D](#)

American Economic Review, Conditionally Accepted (with Zarek Brot-Goldberg, Samantha Burn, and Tim Layton)

[The Value of Improving Insurance Quality: Evidence from Long-Run Medicaid Attrition](#)

Journal of Health Economics, 2024 (with Ajin Lee)

[The Behavioral Foundations of Default Effects: Theory and Evidence from Medicare Part D](#)

American Economic Review, 2023 (with Zarek Brot-Goldberg, Tim Layton, and Adelina Wang)

[Private Versus Public Provision of Social Insurance: Evidence from Medicaid](#)

AEJ: Economic Policy, 2022 (with Tim Layton, Nicole Maestas, and Daniel Prinz)

[The Consequences of Health Care Privatization: Evidence from Medicare Advantage Exits](#)

AEJ: Economic Policy, 2018 (with Mark Duggan and Jon Gruber), *Finalist for 2019 NIHCM Research Award*

[Who Benefits When the Government Pays More? Pass-Through in the Medicare Advantage Program](#)

Journal of Public Economics, 2016 (with Mark Duggan and Amanda Starc)

Policy and Medical Journal Articles:

[Rejection of prescription drugs due to formulary restrictions: 2018 to 2024](#)

JAMA: Original Investigation, 2026 (with Caleb Alexander, Ben Ippolito, and Joe Levy)

[Medigap Regulations Provide Protections for Beneficiaries, But May Raise Premiums](#)

Health Affairs, 2025 (with Mike Chernew, Tim Layton, Michael McWilliams, and Jingwei Sun)

[How Much Patient Cost Sharing is Paid Upfront for Care?](#)

AEI Economic Perspectives, 2025 (with Ben Ippolito)

[Patient Repayment of Hospital Bills from 2018 to 2024](#)

JAMA Health Forum, 2025 (with Ben Ippolito et al)

[Health Outcomes Under Full-Risk Medicare Advantage vs Traditional Medicare](#)

AJMC, 2025 (with Ken Cohen et al)

[Medicare Advantage Denies 17 Percent of Initial Claims](#)

Health Affairs, 2025 (with Mike Chernew and Andrew Hicks)

[Potential Spillover Effects on Traditional Medicare When Physicians Bear MA Risk](#)

AJMC, 2025 (with Ken Cohen et al)

[Medicare Risk Arrangement and Utilization and Outcomes Among Physician Groups](#)

JAMA Network Open, 2025 (with Ken Cohen et al)

[Comparing Expected Out-Of-Pocket Costs in MA and FFS Medicare, 2014-2020](#)

Health Affairs Datawatch, 2024 (with Ben Ippolito and Erin Trish)

[How do prescription drug benefits differ between Medicare Advantage and Stand-Alone Part D Plans?](#)

AEI Economic Perspectives, 2024 (with Ben Ippolito)

[Medicaid vs Medicare: Evidence from Medicaid to Medicare Transitions at 65](#)

NBER DRC Center Paper, 20-15

(with Tim Layton, Nicole Maestas, Daniel Prinz, and Mark Shepard)

[Estimating Variation in Productivity Across State Medicaid Programs: Evidence from Dual-Eligibles](#)

NBER DRC Center Paper, 21-12

(with Tim Layton, Nicole Maestas, Daniel Prinz, and Mark Shepard)

[The impact of Medicare Advantage growth on Part D competition, costs, and coverage](#)

Health Affairs Forefront, 2023 (with Ben Ippolito)

[How should policymakers respond to rising cost-sharing that often goes unpaid?](#)

Health Affairs Forefront, 2023 (with Ben Ippolito)

[Comparison of Care Quality Metrics in 2-Sided Risk Medicare Advantage vs Fee-for-Service Medicare Programs](#)

JAMA Network Open, 2022 (with Ken Cohen, Omid Ameli, et al)

Non-Academic Employment:

Various Health Tech Firms, *Advisor*, *Consultant*, *Founder*: 2014–

Personal:

Languages: English (native), Russian (native), French (proficient), *Interests*: Classical Piano, Traveling, Hiking, Biking, Skiing, Sailing