

Boris Vabson

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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 CMS's senior advisor on Medicare Advantage, overseeing MA strategy for CMMI and the agency as a whole. 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:

Senior Advisor & Head of CMMI MA Policy, CMS, 2025-

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

Nonacademic/Non-Policy Roles: Listed elsewhere

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 (recognizing the most impactful health care research of preceding year)
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:

Rationing Medicine Through Paperwork: Authorization Restrictions in Medicare Part D

(with Zarek Brot-Goldberg, Samantha Burn, and Tim Layton)

American Economic Review, Conditionally Accepted

The Value of Improving Insurance Quality: Evidence from Long-Run Medicaid Attrition

(with Ajin Lee)

Journal of Health Economics, 2024

The Behavioral Foundations of Default Effects: Theory and Evidence from Medicare Part D

(with Zarek Brot-Goldberg, Tim Layton, and Adelina Yanyue Wang)

American Economic Review, 2023

Private Versus Public Provision of Social Insurance: Evidence from Medicaid

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

AEJ: Economic Policy, 2022

The Consequences of Health Care Privatization: Evidence from Medicare Advantage Exits

(with Mark Duggan and Jon Gruber)

AEJ: Economic Policy, 2018, Finalist for 2019 NIHCM Research Award

Who Benefits When the Government Pays More? Pass-Through in the Medicare Advantage Program

(with Mark Duggan and Amanda Starc)

Journal of Public Economics, 2016

Policy and Medical Journal Articles:

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

JAMA Network Open, 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 forthcoming (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)

Working Papers:

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)
Accompanying White Papers: Enrollment Characteristics, Utilization, Quality, Plan Design Within MA

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