

City's municipal labor committee votes to approve Medicare Advantage plan for retirees

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The city's Municipal Labor Committee has voted to approve [Aetna's proposed Medicare Advantage plan](#) for municipal retirees, *Crain's* has learned.

According to an MLC source, 79% of the committee voted in favor the plan Thursday. There are more than 100 unions represented by the MLC, and the vote is weighted based on how many members each union has.

This vote is the latest installment in an ongoing conflict between the city, unions and retirees about privatizing health insurance for more than 200,000 retirees—a conflict that began in 2018. The city has said that switching retirees from supplemental, city-sponsored health insurance to Medicare Advantage could save the city up to \$600 million per year in premiums, because the federal government would then cover those costs.

Aetna's plan, proposed last week, appears to include [\\$0 co-pays and wider coverage](#) than the SeniorCare supplemental plan many retirees are currently on, which is administered by EmblemHealth. But under the terms of the agreement between Aetna and the city, approving the plan would [eliminate the SeniorCare option](#) for retirees.

The NYC Organization of Public Service Retirees, which has more than 17,000 members and has disapproved of the switch from the jump, has decried Aetna's proposal and encouraged the City Council to amend the administrative codes related to the plans so seniors could still access the SeniorCare plan. The organization has argued that Medicare Advantage could offer worse coverage than the supplemental plans, and that retirees should be entitled to the same benefits they were offered upon deciding to work for the city.

The council has not yet voted on whether to change the codes.

Meanwhile, the MLC and the city have said the proposed plan would allow the city to save money while offering retirees more coverage options and an out-of-pocket cost maximum, which the SeniorCare plan does not currently have.

Michael Mulgrew, the president of the United Federation of Teachers union which is part of the MLC, said Thursday that the unions will monitor how the plan is implemented to ensure it delivers on its objectives.

"Aetna's much-improved Medicare Advantage proposal, with new guarantees about prior authorization of services and enhanced other benefits, has been approved overwhelmingly by the Municipal Labor Committee," he said. "The plan is designed to provide high-quality, premium-free health care. We will continue to monitor its implementation to ensure that Aetna meets its obligations to our retirees."

The city has not yet responded to a request for comment.

This is a developing story and will be updated.