

METRO

State probing insurer for booting 2,000 doctors

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MEDICAL EXAM: AG Eric Schneiderman is looking into UnitedHealth's purge of 2,000 doctors.

WASHINGTON — State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman is probing insurance giant UnitedHealth for booting 2,000 New York doctors from its Medicare Advantage health plan.

Word of the inquiry, revealed in letters the AG sent to UnitedHealth and the feds in early December, comes just days after [The Post reported](#) that the New York Medical Society is suing the company in Brooklyn federal court, charging the purge violates contracts with doctors.

"It has come to the Health Care Bureau's attention that UnitedHealthcare has been in the process of terminating thousands of doctors from its Medicare Advantage Plan, resulting in at least 8,000 seniors losing plan coverage for their trusted physicians," Schneiderman wrote to the company.

Noting that open enrollment ended Dec. 7 for Medicare Advantage plans, the AG's office noted, "We are concerned that seniors will have had insufficient time to make an informed choice."

He then requested information on the breakdown and number of physicians getting bumped, as well as the number of patients who would lose their doctor.

An AG source said the company is complying.

The AG also interceded with the feds to urge an extension of open enrollment, writing to the head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to argue: "I am concerned that thousands of seniors in New York state will be unable to make informed decisions" about their plans.

He urged them to look into whether UnitedHealth had "intentionally or effectively targeted particular types of physicians or patients" — an indication he wants to know if the company is purging high-end specialists.

The centers didn't extend the deadline.

Both of New York's senators were sent copies of the letter.

The medical society has been reaching out to a range of powerful pols in order to try to block the move, in addition to filing its lawsuit.

Medical society President Sam Unterricht told The Post he had also appealed to Sen. Charles Schumer, but indicated Schumer didn't have success.

"We had hoped that his office might have been able to intervene and convince the insurance company to reverse the terminations, but they weren't able to do that. They haven't really gotten back to us lately. We haven't heard lately of any efforts on their behalf," he said.

Schumer's office said he had "made inquiries" with the centers on the subject.

Medicare Advantage plans are a private alternative to Medicare. ObamaCare attempts to recoup costs by wringing nearly \$200 billion in savings over a decade from the program.

In the lawsuit, the medical society charges that, "By terminating numerous physicians from the . . . network, United seeks to stem financial losses occasioned by reduced federal payments under the Affordable Care Act," a k a ObamaCare.

UnitedHealth said in a statement, "The changes we are making are designed to improve the quality and affordability of health care coverage for Medicare beneficiaries. We have worked with and will continue to work Attorney General Schneiderman and others to address the concerns of the local physician community regarding these changes."