



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Addabbo Introduces Bill to Help Low-Income Seniors Afford Expensive Prescription Drugs

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR March 12, 2012

| ISSUE: **EPIC (ELDERLY PHARMACEUTICAL INSURANCE COVERAGE PROGRAM)**

Queens, NY, March 12, 2012 -- NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Queens), a member of the Senate Committee on Aging, has introduced legislation (S.6417) to provide greater access to prescription drugs for low-income seniors and the disabled.

“Although Medicare now provides a Part D prescription drug benefit, the fact of the matter is that out-of-pocket costs may still be too much for many seniors to afford,” said Addabbo.

“While Medicare and New York State’s Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program seek to ensure that prescription medications are available to those who require them, not everyone is able to balance their need for medicine with the costs of food, housing and other basic life necessities.”

Under the Senator’s bill, which would establish the “Medicaid Prescription Senior Eligibility Expansion Program,” new groups of low-income senior and disabled New Yorkers would be able to afford prescription drugs under the Medicaid program. The first group, “qualified Medicare beneficiaries,” would be those with annual incomes equal to or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level, which is \$11,170 for a single person, and \$15,130 for two people. The second group, “specified low-income Medicare beneficiaries,” would have incomes between 100 and 120 percent of the poverty level. These groups of low-income seniors and disabled New Yorkers now earn too much to qualify for prescription drug coverage under Medicaid, the health care program for the very poor, but also can’t afford other pharmaceutical programs.

“By some estimates, almost 30 percent of Medicare enrollees in New York State don’t have any coverage for pharmaceuticals,” said the Senator. “In addition, millions more of elderly and disabled Medicare enrollees are underinsured, and can’t gain access to all of the medications they need to safeguard their health.”

This legislation would enable the State of New York to seek a partnership with the United States Department of Health and Human Services through a Medicare 1115 demonstration waiver authorizing the expanded prescription drug eligibility through Medicaid.

“This measure would lend an important helping hand to low-income seniors and disabled New Yorkers who make too much to get prescription drugs through Medicaid, but don’t make enough to afford them through Medicare Part D,” said Addabbo. “No one should have to choose between life-saving medications and food.”

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