

Formerly NJ Foundation for Aging



To the Assembly Aging & Senior
Services Committee
June 2, 2021

Thank you for recognizing me and allowing me to speak today.

As the Executive Director of NJAAW, we would like to show our support for this important expansion in the PAAD and Senior Gold programs.

When it comes to health care costs, particularly prescription drugs, many older NJ residents are caught in the middle – their income is too high to qualify for Medicaid or other programs, but they do not have the resources to live comfortably while providing for their medical needs. Many do not have access to or the funds to purchase insurance options that would provide necessary coverage, like Medicare Advantage plans or retirement health plans.

Two of the easiest things to cut when an older person is financially strapped are food and medicine – and these are two that can have disastrous effects. In fact, the high cost of prescription drugs is at the top of the list of concerns Americans have about their health care. With more drugs being approved to treat conditions and improve both the quality and quantity of life, prescription drug coverage is becoming more important and more challenging. It is important to understand that need for assistance in paying for drug coverage is not just for increasing prices but also due to new options for prescription treatments that simply weren't available before.

We realize this will cost the state money and understand there may be resistance based on these costs. But we also see the long-term cost efficiencies when health is maintained. By raising the eligibility level, we expect up to 20,000 more residents will be able to take part in this program. We expect better health, reduced medical interventions, reduced disability and lower hospitalizations and emergency room visits. This expansion will be an investment in the health of older residents and those with disabilities and will benefit not only those in the programs, but the state as well with long-term cost savings.

Thank you and please let me know if there is anything we can do to help you decide on this bill.

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