



The **Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network** is a collaborative group of individuals and associations working with and for Wisconsin's older adults to shape public policy to improve their quality of life.

Core member organizations:

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (*ADPAW*)

Alzheimer's Association SE Wisconsin Chapter

Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (*WADSA*)

Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (*W4A*)

Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (*WABS*)

Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (*WAND*)

Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (*WASC*)

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Aging Advocates Urge No Changes to SeniorCare

(MADISON, WI) In response to Governor Walker's 2015-'17 state budget proposal, the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) is calling on state legislators to keep SeniorCare as it is to ensure that the nearly 85,000 SeniorCare enrollees are not hurt by higher costs. Calling the program "well targeted and extremely successful in meeting the needs of very low-income older people," WAAN asserts that proposed changes would significantly increase the out-of-pocket costs for those who can least afford it.

The Governor's plan calls for SeniorCare recipients to first enroll in the Medicare Part D prescription drug program. According to Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator at the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, the average cost for a Medicare Part D plan in Wisconsin is \$61 per month – significantly higher than SeniorCare's low enrollment fee. "Requiring SeniorCare enrollees to first purchase Part D insurance would increase their total out-of-pocket costs by an average of \$732 per year," says Zander. "Low-income seniors can't afford that kind of financial hit."

Medicare Part D requires seniors to have creditable coverage to avoid penalties and SeniorCare provides that coverage. Under the Governor's proposal however, Wisconsin seniors who may have been using SeniorCare solely to maintain creditable coverage, would be forced to purchase a Part D plan or face a penalty.

Zander also notes that older people and their families like the administrative simplicity of SeniorCare. "The program requires a \$30 annual fee and a \$5 or \$15 co-payment for each prescription with most drugs covered under the Medicaid formula," says Zander. "The same simplicity does not apply to Medicare Part D which requires extensive research every year to determine the best plan in terms of costs and benefits."

SeniorCare is very cost-effective for the state with the largest share (61.4%) of program costs coming from rebates from pharmaceutical companies, 20% from federal matching, and 18.6% from Wisconsin General Purpose Revenue (GPR). Any savings in the state portion would result in at least the loss of an equal amount of federal matching dollars and the loss of 100% of the rebate revenues which amounted to \$52.9 million from 2013-2014.

According to Zander, the Joint Committee on Finance rejected a similar proposal in 2011 on a 15-1 bipartisan vote and she is hopeful that this legislature will do the same. "We urge legislators to continue their strong bipartisan support for Wisconsin's unique, successful, and popular SeniorCare program."

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