

February 26, 2024

Greetings Senators Rotundo and Baldacci, Representatives Sachs and Meyer, and members of the Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services,

My name is Harry Madson and I live in Bangor. I am testifying today against the proposed cuts to the Medicare Saving Program in LD 2214, the Governor's Supplemental Budget.

For the past five years I have volunteered with Eastern Area Agency on Aging (EAAA) as a SHIP (State Health Insurance Program) Medicare counselor. During that time, I estimate I have helped over 100 people apply for MSP and helped another 100 people with MSP identify the best prescription drug plan based on their current medication list. My experience and observations lead me to believe that the Medicare Saving Program (MSP) may be the best, most effective way to help people over 65 with limited income.

People that qualify for MSP in Maine do not have to pay the monthly Part B Medicare premium (currently \$174.40/m), are provided a cost-free Part D prescription drug plan with reduced out-of-pocket cost when picking up medication at the pharmacy.

The impact of being part of MSP is extremely significant. MSP allows people to have more spendable income, it allows people to seek medical treatment any time it is needed without worry about the cost of seeing a doctor or going to the hospital, and it encourages people to have a Primary Care Physician rather than using the local Emergency Room services.

Recently EAAA was able to help a client from Down East Maine, in her early seventies with limited income who was having difficulty paying her medical expenses. She stated that she had been advised when she turned 65 by an insurance agent that she needed a Medigap policy along with a prescription drug plan – total cost including her Part B Medicare premium over \$400 per month. The client indicated that her month SS Retirement income was under \$1500 per month which allowed EAAA to help her complete an application for MSP. Within 45 days she was awarded MSP-QMB. Accessing MSP meant she no longer had to pay \$400/m for health insurance, the award of MSP increased her spendable income by \$400 each month plus she had access to quality health service with very minimum out of pocket cost. Having the additional \$400 per month allows her to focus on meeting her basic needs to purchase food, pay for utilities, etc. Without this additional support, she was at risk of going without daily necessities.

I've worked with so many older Mainers who have been positively impacted by MSP. The legislature's work last session increases the number of people who qualify for MSP and this will have a large positive impact for many older adults – it improves people's quality of life and access medical support and offers peace of mind by increasing their spendable income. I urge the legislature to reject the proposed cuts to MSP in this budget and to ensure immediate implementation of the expanded eligibility limits established last session.

Harris N. Madson
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