



SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Chairman Bob Casey

Lowering Medicare Premiums and Prescription Drug Costs Act (S.1844)

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE

This Act may be cited as the "Lowering Medicare Premiums and Prescription Drug Costs Act".

SECTION 2. MEDICARE COST ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(a) Amends Title XVIII of the Social Security Act by adding the following text to -

(a) Create the Medicare Cost Assistance Program (MCAP) to provide Medicare Part A and Part B cost assistance, including coverage of premiums and cost-sharing, to eligible individuals.

(b)

(1) Define individuals eligible for MCAP to include individuals currently eligible for the Medicare Savings Program, specifically Qualified Medicare Beneficiary, Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary and Qualifying Individual, or an individual entitled to Medicare Part A with an income at or below 200 percent poverty, applicable to family size. Eligibility does not include an asset test.

(2)

(A) Instruct the Commissioner of Social Security to jointly determine an individual eligible for MCAP and Extra Help upon application.

(B) Establish that enrollment in MCAP shall be effective the month of application and that an individual is to remain eligible until redetermination.

(C) Outline that redeterminations cannot occur more frequently than once a year and an individual is to remain eligible for assistance unless the Commissioner has information indicating a change in circumstance. In the case of a change in circumstance, the individual is to receive a notice from the Commissioner and shall be given an opportunity to correct any errors. The Commissioner shall also establish a process for an appeal of determination.

(D) Determine that full-benefit dual eligible individuals and recipients of supplemental security income are treated as automatically eligible for MCAP.

(E) Direct that the Secretary, in consultation with beneficiary advocates, shall develop and distribute a simplified application form to be used by MCAP and Extra Help eligible individuals. Such an application shall be translated into at least 10 languages other than English.

(3) Set parameters for income eligibility, including that support and maintenance furnished in kind shall not be counted as income.

(c) Establish protections for MCAP enrollees against improper billing.

(d) Instruct the Secretary to establish procedures for administration of MCAP.

(e) Provide conforming amendments.

(f) Instruct the Commissioner regarding beneficiary outreach efforts.

(b) Create a Special Enrollment Period so that MCAP eligible individuals are able to enroll in Medicare at any time of the year without penalty.

(c) Instruct the Commissioner to create public awareness campaign to carry out outreach and education activities related to MCAP. This shall be done in coordination with the State Health Insurance Assistance Program, Administrator of the Administration for Community Living and Administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, funded at \$10 million per year for three years.

SECTION 3. MOVING MEDICARE COST-SHARING BENEFITS FROM MEDICAID TO MEDICARE

(a-c) Instructs the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate to develop and implement a plan to transition individuals from the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary, Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary and Qualifying Individual Programs to MCAP. Includes conforming amendments.

SECTION 4. ENHANCING PRESCRIPTION DRUG AFFORDABILITY BY EXPANDING ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE WITH OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS UNDER MEDICARE PART D FOR LOW-INCOME SENIORS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

(a) Amends Section 1860D-14 of the Social Security Act to increase eligibility for full benefit Extra Help from 135 percent to 200 percent Federal Poverty Level and eliminate partial benefit Extra Help. Instructs that determinations shall be made jointly for Extra Help and MCAP and that support and maintenance furnished in kind shall not be counted as income for the purposes of determining eligibility for Extra Help.

(b) Ensures that all Extra Help recipients also enrolled in Medicaid home and community-based services pay zero copay for prescription drugs.