

Fixing Medicare Part D: Eliminate the Doughnut Hole

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On Wednesday, July 12, New Jersey Citizen Action announced a new report about how the overly confusing Medicare Part D Program hurts seniors in New Jersey and how it can be fixed. Specifically, it points to the doughnut hole - the point at which coverage is suspended - as a serious problem. Congressman Steve Rothman's (D-NJ) statement on the issue follows:

"Medicare Part D is broken and we must fix it. The new prescription drug program, referred to as Medicare Part D, is overly confusing and not working for seniors. The so-called "doughnut hole," which stops prescription drug coverage for 3.8 million seniors, is one of the most glaring failures of the program.

"As this new report points out, many seniors will soon lose their Part D benefits and have no prescription drug coverage as a result of the hole in coverage under Part D. People on low, fixed incomes will no longer have coverage for vital, life-saving medicines. They will be forced, once again, to choose between paying for medicine or food. At the same time, to add insult to injury, while in the doughnut hole without coverage, seniors will continue to pay a premium to the insurance company administering their plan. This situation is inexcusable.

"The President and Republican Majority in Congress had a chance to provide real help for seniors. Instead, they chose to push through a terrible bill, in the middle of the night, that shortchanges seniors, but gives \$46 billion to insurance companies. The bill also forbids the government from negotiating cheaper drug prices. I opposed these bad ideas from the start.

"The Republican Majority created a terrible mess with Medicare Part D. I am proud to join my New Jersey Democratic colleagues and New Jersey Citizen Action in the fight to clean it up. We can fix Medicare Part D by providing a prescription drug benefit through Medicare, ending the subsidies for insurance companies, and allowing the government to negotiate lower drug prices. Doing so will eliminate the doughnut hole and provide a benefit worthy of our seniors."

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