

February 2024

The Honorable Charles Sydnor, Senator
The Honorable Aletheia McCaskill, Delegate
The Honorable Sheila Ruth, Delegate
Honorable Chair and Members of the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
Honorable Chair and Members of the House Appropriations Committee

Re: Senate Bill 0349: State Prescription Drug Benefits – Retirees
House Bill 0670: State Prescription Drug Benefits - Retirees

As you know, in 2011, anticipating improvements to Medicare Part D, the Maryland General Assembly moved to end retiree prescription drug coverage and have those receiving benefits obtain them through Part D. Subsequently both AFSCME and a retiree have attempted to reverse this action however in several rulings the judge has determined that the State is within its rights to terminate coverage.

The loss of prescription drug coverage will undoubtedly lead to poor health outcomes and in the long term higher medical expenses. Patients (retirees) will question the purpose of visiting their physician if they cannot afford to pay for the medications they may be prescribed. Failure to treat disease and illness in less acute phases will lead to more serious conditions and attendant hospitalizations and invasive treatments.

As explained in the link attached, provided by UMBC's retiree organization the Wisdom Institute, this ruling will be antithetical to Governor Moore's motto: Leave No One Behind. State employee retirees, many of whom provided their service forgoing higher salaries available in the private sector, working during furloughs, in anticipation of a reliable benefits system as they aged are now facing increased costs and diminished outcomes.

This decision will affect not only retirees, but their spouses, and in some cases their children. Sadly, it appears that for some this issue has devolved into yet another partisan issue but healthcare is a human need and disease doesn't check one's political belief system or citizenship status, or one's ability to afford care and treatment.

I encourage you to read the information provided by the Wisdom Institute and seek an equitable solution to this problem.

https://wisdom.umbc.edu/prescription-drug-benefits/?fbclid=IwAR1Qb7sqQQQ9ycJOBcIIUJcaHZBQ1I752TavxikZS4Ve00V_1D3E8T1b7Hc

Respectfully,



Paula W. Wolf