



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 20, 2003

Contact: Deane Beebe  
Communications Director  
212-204-6219

**On Behalf of Millions Nationwide, Nearly One Hundred Organizations Urge Congress to  
Pass Drug Benefit for Everyone with Medicare**

NEW YORK, NY— Nearly one hundred national and local labor, consumer advocacy and religious organizations representing millions of older and disabled Americans are calling on Congress to pass legislation to provide everyone with Medicare a meaningful prescription drug benefit that offers the same security as the traditional Medicare program.

“Day after day we collectively hear heartbreaking stories from older and disabled Americans who cannot pay for their prescription drugs,” said Robert M. Hayes, president of the Medicare Rights Center. “We are informing lawmakers of what we have all learned firsthand, so that Congress will pass a drug benefit that meets the needs of everyone with Medicare.”

The Medicare Rights Center sent Congress a letter on behalf of about 100 organizations, including the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement and Retirees, the Older Women’s League, Public Citizen and NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, outlining the principles of a meaningful drug benefit:

- **Accessible:** Like Medicare Part B benefits, while voluntary, the prescription drug benefit should be automatic, so that people in need are not administratively denied participation.
- **Equitable:** All working Americans pay into Medicare and all eligible Americans should get the same Medicare benefits, including prescription drugs, at the same cost, regardless of income, where they live, or their health condition.
- **Secure and reliable:** Everyone with Medicare who needs drug coverage should get it and be able to count on a reliable benefit from one year to the next.

The letter also explains that:

- Enacting a low-income drug benefit would leave millions of older and disabled Americans without coverage for their prescription drugs because of the hurdles inherent to the application process.
- Middle-income Americans with high drug costs who are not eligible for a low-income drug benefit will be forced to forego their medications or pushed into poverty.
- A catastrophic cap of \$4,000 on drug spending will only help 1 in 20 people with Medicare.
- A private market benefit will not cover the large majority of people with Medicare, since only 11 percent have enrolled in Medicare private plans.
- Many people with Medicare who are able to join private plans to get drug coverage will be forced to give up their trusted doctors in exchange for some drug coverage.
- A “drug-only” insurance policy is not cost effective nor is it commercially viable because older and disabled people with Medicare are viewed by the industry as bad insurance risks.

A copy of the signed letter to Congress is available at: [www.medicarerights.org/rxlettertocongress.html](http://www.medicarerights.org/rxlettertocongress.html)

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**Medicare Rights Center** (MRC) is the largest independent source of Medicare information and assistance in the United States. Founded in 1989, MRC helps older adults and people with disabilities get high-quality, affordable health care.