



Medicare Expansion

On December 12, 2019, House Speaker Pelosi and House Democrats passed the Lower Drug Costs Now Act (H.R. 3). The bill allows the government to negotiate lower drug prices for people covered by Medicare and private insurance. The bill is awaiting Senate action.

H.R. 3 requires the government to negotiate lower drug prices and caps out-of-pocket spending on prescription drugs under Part D to \$2,000 a year. H.R. 3 will save nearly \$500 billion, which will be used to expand Medicare benefits. The following expansion bills were rolled into HR 3:

Medicare Hearing Act (H.R. 4618)

H.R. 4618, introduced by Representatives Lucy McBath (D-GA) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI), will provide coverage for hearing services and hearing aids to millions of Medicare beneficiaries. Currently, Medicare only provides coverage for hearing and balance exams. Fifty percent of Americans who are 60 or older have a meaningful hearing impediment. Research has linked hearing loss to falls, dementia, cognitive decline, social isolation, and reduced quality of life. These conditions increase an individual's total Medicare spending by an average of \$2,500 annually, according to one analysis.

Medicare Dental Act (H.R. 4650)

H.R. 4650, introduced by Representatives Robin Kelly (D-IL) and Steven Horsford (D-NV), will provide coverage for preventative dental screening, as well as routine treatment and major services, like root canals. Medicare does not cover most dental services such as preventive dental care, routine dental treatments, or dentures. Lack of dental coverage can affect one's overall health and exacerbate chronic conditions like diabetes, cardiovascular and kidney disease. In 2016, half of Medicare beneficiaries did not see a dentist, and the 20% that did spent \$1,000 for dental services. H.R. 4650 would also cover dentures.

Medicare Vision Act (H.R. 4665)

H.R. 4665 sponsored by Representatives Kim Schrier (D-WA), Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI) and Suzan DelBene (D-WA), will provide routine eye examinations and fitting services for eyeglasses and contact lenses. Currently, Medicare only covers vision services related to certain diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts and diabetes retinopathy. H.R. 4665 would also cover either one pair of eyeglasses during a two-year period or a two-year supply of contact lenses.