



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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White House Issues “Older Americans Month” Proclamation

The White House has officially [proclaimed](#) the month of May “Older Americans Month,” outlining a number of programs and resources that will help seniors remain safe and healthy as they age.

President Biden noted that the American Rescue Plan, passed into law in 2021, invested \$1.4 billion to provide older adults with services for nutrition, health promotion, disease prevention, caregiver support, and long-term care. It also provided additional Medicaid funding to support millions of older adults with disabilities and to help states improve the quality of caregiving jobs.

“Older Americans contribute their time and wisdom to make our communities stronger, more informed, and better connected,” said Biden in the proclamation. “They are our loved ones, friends, mentors, essential workers, volunteers, and neighbors.”

In addition, the proclamation stated that the Administration is dedicated to improving the safety and quality of care in nursing homes — ensuring that facilities have sufficient staff, that families have the necessary information to support their loved ones, and that poorly performing nursing homes are held accountable.

“This White House is truly committed to providing the resources that seniors need to have a secure and healthy retirement,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance.

“President Biden is a strong ally and Alliance members are determined to work with him to expand Social Security and lower drug prices.”

Alliance Facilitates Partnership with Labor Movement, SUNY to Help Students with Family, Financial Obligations

Building on a mentorship program that the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) established with Aviation High School in Long Island City, New York, the Alliance has helped bring together the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and IAMAW in a partnership with the State University of New York (SUNY) that provides pre-enrollment credits toward a college degree for high school students. The credits are for extra classes taken in a high school aviation program.

The partnership will credit graduates from Aviation High School who earn their Federal Aviation Administration airframe or powerplant license with 28 to 29 college credits — roughly the

equivalent of one year of college — toward a bachelor's degree in transportation management or labor studies before they enroll in courses at SUNY Empire State College.



President Roach spoke with the students in New York on Wednesday, April 27.

IAMAW officials have been working on the program with Aviation High School for two decades, and the Alliance facilitated discussions between AFT, UFT and SUNY officials to set a goal and execute a plan. The work culminated in Aviation High School and SUNY Empire State College representatives formally signing the new agreement on April 27.

“The Alliance is engaging with young people as well as seniors. The program helps students who have to take care of parents, grandparents or other family members during high school, so they are not left behind due to their caregiving responsibilities. It also helps students

who have financial or other family obligations and may need to work,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “UFT members, who are affiliated with AFT, were key to obtaining this agreement. Their dedication and expertise led to this successful outcome. This is a program that could go nationwide if the results are what we believe we can achieve.”



Left to right: Janella Hinds, VP, Academic High Schools, UFT; Mary Vaccaro, VP for Education, UFT; Steven Jackson, Principal, Aviation High School; Dora Cervantes, IAMAW Treasurer; President Roach; Sue Epstein, Exec. Dir., Office of Partnerships, SUNY Empire State College (ESC); Nathan Gonyea, Officer in Charge, SUNY ESC; Maria Figueroa, Dean, Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School of Labor Studies, SUNY ESC

More photos from the signing event can be viewed [here](#). Visit the [SUNY Empire State College](#) website to learn more about this new and exciting program.

COVID-19 Death Toll Among Older Americans Still Rising

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, unvaccinated people have accounted for a majority of COVID-19 deaths in the United States. But, in recent months, [an alarming number of vaccinated older and disabled Americans](#) have succumbed to the disease.

Forty-two percent of the people who died in January and February during the highly contagious omicron variant's surge were vaccinated, compared with 23% in September, the peak of the delta wave. Most of the vaccinated people who died had not received a booster shot. This analysis was conducted by *The Washington Post* using data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

While a majority of seniors are immunized, the vaccine's potency wanes over time, leaving older people vulnerable to severe infection. The highest concentration of vaccinated deaths occurred among older Americans and the immunocompromised, with those over the age of 75 making up two-thirds of the deaths from the 'omicron' wave.

Still, unvaccinated people remain far more likely to die from COVID-19 than the vaccinated, especially when compared to Americans who have received booster shots.

Health experts continue to stress that the overwhelming majority of the vaccinated will survive COVID-19 infection. However, they argue that the deaths serve as a reminder that high-risk groups such as older Americans should receive booster doses and exercise extra precautions during infection surges.

"Seniors remain especially vulnerable during this pandemic," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "The CDC has [approved second booster doses](#) for those 65 and older and those 50 and older with [underlying medical conditions](#) that increase their risk for severe disease from COVID-19, and we encourage all seniors to follow their guidance when it comes to receiving that added level of protection."

Kaiser Health News: Medicare Surprise – Drug Plan Prices Touted During Open Enrollment Can Rise Within a Month

By Susan Jaffe



Something strange happened between the time **Linda Griffith** signed up for a new Medicare prescription drug plan during last fall's enrollment period and when she tried to fill her first prescription in January.

She picked a Humana drug plan for its low prices, with help from her longtime insurance agent and Medicare's Plan Finder, an online pricing tool for comparing a dizzying array of options. But instead of the \$70.09 she expected to pay for her dextroamphetamine, used to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, her pharmacist told her she owed \$275.90.

“I didn’t pick it up because I thought something was wrong,” said Griffith, 73, a retired construction company accountant who lives in the Northern California town of Weaverville.

“To me, when you purchase a plan, you have an implied contract,” she said. “I say I will pay the premium on time for this plan. And they’re going to make sure I get the drug for a certain amount.”

But it often doesn’t work that way. As early as three weeks after Medicare’s drug plan enrollment period ends on Dec. 7, insurance plans can change what they charge members for drugs — and they can do it repeatedly. Griffith’s prescription out-of-pocket cost has varied each month, and through March, she has already paid \$433 more than she expected to.

[Read more here.](#)

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.4 million retirees and their families.