



Public Testimony
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Re: Expanding Medicare Savings Program
Senate Bill 271
April 25, 2017

Submitted by The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty

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The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty is a coalition of diverse religious communities and advocacy partners throughout the state who have come together to fight poverty. We are submitting written testimony today in **support of Senate Bill 271**, expanding access to the Medicare Savings Program.

Health care costs continue to cause significant financial strain for many low- and moderate-income seniors. While Medicare is an excellent primary provider of medical coverage, there are still substantial out-of-pocket costs for many seniors, including co-payments, services outside of Medicare's scope (e.g. dental care, vision care, hearing aids), and Medicare Part B premiums. Estimates are that a Rhode Islander enrolled in traditional Medicare faces out-of-pocket costs that average between \$5,500-\$6,000. The Medicare Savings Program covers the Medicare Part B premium, providing significant financial relief to struggling seniors.

As a society, we have a moral responsibility to attend to the needs of elders who are struggling to make ends meet. All Rhode Island seniors should be free to age with dignity and financial security, knowing that their medical needs will be met *and* they'll still have enough money to meet their other basic needs, including expenses for food, housing and heat.

We support expanding eligibility for the Medicare Savings Programs to include people with incomes up to 185% of the federal poverty level.