

105TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 4662

To direct the Commissioner of Social Security to establish a demonstration project to conduct outreach efforts to increase awareness of the availability of Medicare cost-sharing assistance to eligible low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 1, 1998

Mr. BUNNING introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To direct the Commissioner of Social Security to establish a demonstration project to conduct outreach efforts to increase awareness of the availability of Medicare cost-sharing assistance to eligible low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress makes the following findings:

5 (1) Since 1988, three cost-sharing payment pro-
6 grams to provide certain low-income elderly and dis-

1 abled individuals with financial assistance in cover-
2 ing Medicare beneficiary costs have been established
3 by law.

4 (2) While eligibility for Medicare cost-sharing
5 assistance has expanded, and while the Social Secu-
6 rity Administration, the Health Care Financing Ad-
7 ministration, and State agencies are working coop-
8 eratively to identify and implement reforms to cure
9 the chronic deficiencies associated with the programs
10 described in paragraph (1), reports have shown that
11 gaps in beneficiary knowledge and deficiencies in
12 program administration by Federal and State agen-
13 cies present persistent barriers to enrolling eligible
14 beneficiaries in such programs.

15 (3) The financial plight of Social Security and
16 Medicare beneficiaries who experience critical income
17 shifts due to the death of a spouse is of particular
18 concern. Statistics furnished by the Social Security
19 Administration show that 40 percent of nonmarried
20 women (a category that includes widows) rely on So-
21 cial Security benefits for 90 percent of their income
22 in comparison to only 18 percent of married couples.
23 Further, nearly one quarter of nonmarried women
24 rely on Social Security retirement benefits as their
25 sole source of income.

1 (4) While current reform proposals concentrate
2 on reaching potential eligible beneficiaries upon ini-
3 tial enrollment in Social Security or the Medicare
4 program, the financial vulnerability of widowed
5 spouses may arise at any time after a senior has
6 begun to receive retirement benefits.

7 **SEC. 2. DEMONSTRATION PROJECT.**

8 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

9 (1) OUTREACH.—The Commissioner shall es-
10 tablish a demonstration project to conduct outreach
11 efforts to identify individuals entitled to benefits
12 under the Medicare program who may be eligible for
13 medical assistance for payment of the cost of Medi-
14 care cost-sharing under the Medicaid program under
15 section 1902(a)(10)(E) and section 1933 of the So-
16 cial Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396a(a)(10)(E);
17 1396u-3) and to notify such individuals of the avail-
18 ability of such medical assistance under such sec-
19 tions.

20 (2) CONTENT OF NOTICE.—Any notice fur-
21 nished under paragraph (1) shall state that eligi-
22 bility for Medicare cost-sharing assistance under
23 such sections is conditioned upon the individual pro-
24 viding an accurate statement as to whether or not
25 the individual has tax-except income, and, if so, the

1 amount of such income and, in the case of an indi-
2 vidual residing in a State that imposes an asset test
3 for such eligibility, the amount of countable assets
4 the individual has.

5 (b) COORDINATION WITH STATES AND OTHER FED-
6 ERAL AGENCIES.—

7 (1) FURNISHING INFORMATION TO STATES.—In
8 conducting the demonstration project established
9 under subsection (a), the Commissioner shall furnish
10 the appropriate agency of each State information
11 consisting of the identity of individuals residing in
12 the State that the Commissioner determines are or
13 may be eligible for medical assistance for payment of
14 the cost of Medicare cost-sharing under the Medic-
15 aid program under section 1902(a)(10)(E) and sec-
16 tion 1933 of such Act, and shall periodically update
17 any such information as appropriate.

18 (2) COORDINATION WITH IRS AND HCFA.—Ex-
19 cept as otherwise prohibited by law, in conducting
20 such demonstration project the Commissioner, in co-
21 operation with the Commissioner of the Internal
22 Revenue Service and the Administrator of the
23 Health Care Financing Administration, shall furnish
24 the appropriate agency of each State available in-
25 come and asset information of individuals residing

1 in the State who are or may be eligible for the medi-
2 cal assistance described in paragraph (1).

3 (c) DURATION.—The Commissioner shall conduct the
4 demonstration project during the 1-year period beginning
5 on October 1, 1998.

6 (d) REPORT.—Not later than six months after the
7 completion of the demonstration project, the Commis-
8 sioner, after consultation with the Commissioner of the In-
9 ternal Revenue Service and the Administrator of the
10 Health Care Financing Administration, shall submit to
11 Congress a report on the outreach efforts and results of
12 such efforts under the project. The report may include any
13 recommendations for legislative or administrative actions
14 to further carry out the purpose of the project.

15 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

16 (1) COMMISSIONER.—The term “Commis-
17 sioner” means the Commissioner of Social Security.

18 (2) MEDICAID PROGRAM.—The term “Medicaid
19 program” means the program of medical assistance
20 established under title XIX of the Social Security
21 Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.).

22 (3) MEDICARE PROGRAM.—The term “Medicare
23 program” means the health insurance program es-
24 tablished under title XVIII of such Act (42 U.S.C.
25 1395 et seq.).

1 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—From
2 sums made available to the Social Security Administration
3 for fiscal year 1999 to carry out research and demonstra-
4 tions activities, not more than \$5,000,000 may be obli-
5 gated to carry out the demonstration project under this
6 Act.

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