

Lower Costs, Better Care for Vermonters

There is an urgent need to lower health costs, expand coverage, and reduce racial health disparities across Vermont. That is why it is essential to ensure critical health care measures supported by President Biden remain in upcoming budget reconciliation legislation, specifically empowering Medicare to negotiate for lower drug prices for all Americans, creating a federal solution to close the Medicaid coverage gap, expanding Medicare benefits to include vision, dental, and hearing, and making the premium reductions included in the American Rescue Plan permanent, so Vermonters can continue to access low-cost coverage.

Americans support bold action to lower health costs and curb soaring drug prices, with [88 percent](#) in favor of allowing Medicare to negotiate with pharmaceutical corporations to lower prices. President Biden is committed to tackling these issues head on, demonstrated by his commitment to expanding health coverage through [enhanced subsidies](#), closing the [Medicaid coverage gap](#), and [support](#) for Medicare drug price negotiation.

Vermonters depend on affordable health care, expanded access to coverage, and drug pricing reform to live healthy lives. Empowering the federal government to negotiate prescription drug prices would save Americans more than [\\$150 billion](#) at the pharmacy counter and create an additional [\\$500 billion](#) in savings for the federal government that could be reinvested to [reduce premiums](#), [expand Medicare benefits](#) to include dental, vision, and hearing, and close the Medicaid coverage gap in the 12 states that have refused to accept expansion. We must act now.

The American Rescue Plan Has Helped 24,866 Vermonters Access Affordable Care

- **Strong Marketplace Enrollment.** Nearly [25,000](#) Vermont residents have signed up for coverage through the Marketplace in 2021.
- **Increasing Health Coverage Access For Thousands of Vermonters.** The American Rescue Plan has [reduced or eliminated](#) Marketplace premiums for thousands in Vermont. Under the plan, [5,600](#) uninsured Vermonters are newly eligible for health coverage tax credits and 600 individuals have access to coverage with zero dollar premiums.
- **Meaningful Savings On Premiums.** Premium savings under the American Rescue Plan benefit all Americans. For example, a 60-year-old couple with an annual income of \$75,000 will see their monthly premiums drop from \$1,338, to just \$531, saving more than [\\$807](#) each month.
- **Improving Maternal Health Access.** For new mothers, the American Rescue Plan has created a pathway to coverage, providing states the opportunity to extend [postpartum coverage](#) under Medicaid from 60 days to 12 months following birth.

Lowering Prescription Drug Costs

- **Drug Price Hikes Are Outpacing Inflation.** In 2019, American prescription drug spending soared to [\\$369.7 billion](#), an increase of 5.7 percent, more than [three times](#) the inflation rate for the same period.
- **One Quarter Of Americans Struggle To Access Essential Medications.** [Nearly one in four](#) Americans taking prescription drugs struggles to afford needed medications, with 29 percent reporting not taking medications as instructed within the past year due to cost.
- **Drug Price Negotiation Would Save Billions.** The single most effective measure to bring down drug costs is to empower Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices. Negotiation would save patients more than [\\$150 billion](#) and create [\\$500 billion](#) in savings for the federal government.
- **Reinvestment Of Savings.** When the federal government saves on drug costs, those funds become available to [reduce premiums](#), [expand Medicare benefits](#) to include dental, vision, and hearing, and close the Medicaid coverage gap in the 12 states that have [refused to accept expansion](#).

- **Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Is Overwhelming Popular.** [Nearly nine in ten](#) Americans support empowering Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices.

Drug Prices In Vermont

- In 2019, Vermonters spent [nearly \\$8 million](#) in cash on prescription drugs.
- In 2017, [15 percent](#) of Vermont residents reported that they stopped taking a medication as prescribed due to cost.
- According to a 2018 Vermont Department of Health survey, [44 percent](#) of uninsured Vermonters and 33 percent of insured Vermonters reported being concerned about their ability to afford prescribed medications.
- [More than 150,000](#) Vermonters have chronic conditions like cancer, diabetes, and asthma that require prescription drugs for treatment and management.
- Vermonters overwhelmingly support lowering prescription drug costs. A 2019 AARP survey found that [64 percent](#) of residents believe Vermont should be able to set prescription drug prices in the state.

Expanding Coverage

- **Millions Nationwide Would Gain Stable Coverage.** [4.2 million](#) uninsured people would gain coverage if the American Rescue Plan's subsidies are made permanent, and millions more would continue to save on health care costs.
- **Permanent Health Coverage Subsidies Would Benefit Older Vermonters.** Nearly [25,000](#) Vermonters selected a plan on the Marketplace in 2021, with older adults between [55 and 64](#) making up more than a third of enrollees. The American Rescue Plan offers [significant relief](#) for older individuals, including those at 400 percent of the federal poverty level.

Expanding Medicare Benefits

- **More than 130,000 Vermonters Would Benefit From Expanded Coverage.** Nearly [38 million](#) traditional Medicare enrollees would gain dental, vision, and hearing coverage if Medicare benefits were expanded. Due to lack of coverage, [nearly half](#) of Medicare beneficiaries did not seek dental care in the past year.
- **Medicare Beneficiaries Are 23 Percent Of Vermont's Residents.** In 2018, nearly [one in four](#) Vermonters were Medicare beneficiaries. Recent reports have found between [47](#) and [64](#) percent of Medicare beneficiaries do not have dental coverage, [74 percent](#) lack vision coverage, and [76 percent](#) go without hearing coverage.
- **Income And Racial Inequity Increase Health Disparities.** Half of all Medicare beneficiaries live on annual incomes below [\\$29,650](#), pushing dental, vision, and hearing coverage out of reach. For [beneficiaries of color](#) or those living in [rural](#) areas, accessing these essential benefits has become increasingly challenging.

Senators Patrick Leahy And Bernie Sanders Are Standing Up For Vermonters' Care

Senator Leahy Supports Efforts To Allow Medicare To Negotiate Drug Prices. Sen. Leahy is a [cosponsor](#) of the Empowering Medicare Seniors to Negotiate Drug Prices Act, legislation which would allow for Medicare to negotiate the best possible price of prescription drugs to cut costs.

Senator Sanders Was An Enthusiastic Supporter Of The American Rescue Plan, Providing Relief For Thousands Of Vermont Families. Sanders [voted for](#) the American Rescue Plan, historic legislation that includes measures to expand coverage and to dramatically lower health care costs for thousands of Vermont families. In addition to providing critical pandemic relief, the ARP lowers premiums for people purchasing coverage through the marketplaces and expands access to financial assistance for more middle-class families. Sanders [praised the law](#), stating it is “the most significant piece of legislation to benefit working families in the modern history of this country.”

Representative Peter Welch Is Standing Up For Vermonters’ Care

Rep. Welch Voted For Historic Legislation To Lower Prescription Drug Prices. Rep. Welch voted for the 2019 Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act ([H.R. 3](#)), historic legislation to drastically reduce Americans’ prescription drug prices by up to 55% and save taxpayers nearly \$500 billion over the next 10 years. H.R. 3 included the most comprehensive drug pricing reform in American history and the largest expansion to Medicare’s benefits in decades.

Rep. Welch Is Working To Ensure Big Pharma Plays Fair. Rep. Welch is dedicated to tackling the pharmaceutical industry’s unjust practice of charging American patients significantly higher prices than our counterparts around the world. In April, Rep. Welch was the House lead on a [bicameral letter](#) to HHS Secretary Becerra requesting the establishment of a reference pricing program for prescription drugs, which would lower American drug prices to be in line with other wealthy nations, stating “Americans have been ripped off by pharmaceutical companies for too long, and it is time for a President to finally stand up to the drug companies and stand up for Americans. Our proposal is simple: Drug companies sell to Americans at the same price they sell to other developed nations.”