



CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
MARTIN J. WALSH

July 11, 2019

Senator Cindy F. Friedman  
Chair, Joint Committee on Healthcare  
Financing  
State House, Room 413-D  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Jennifer E. Benson  
Chair, Joint Committee on Healthcare  
Financing  
State House, Room 236  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairwoman Friedman, Chairwoman Benson and Members of the Committee:

I write to you today to express my support of *H1199/S699*, an *Act Regarding Medicare Savings Program Eligibility*, filed by Representative Steven Ultrino and Senator Jason Lewis to expand access to the Medicare Savings Program to older adults in the Commonwealth.

For seniors who are over 65 and living independently, 68% of individuals and 41% of elder couples in Boston have incomes below the elder economic security standard, meaning that they have less income than it costs them to live in the city. Many older adults in our city are facing challenging financial situations and yet do not qualify for the needs-based programs that could assist them.

~~Older adults in Massachusetts pay more than their younger counterparts for healthcare.~~

Massachusetts residents under 65 with an income below \$3,000 a month can access state assisted health insurance premiums for between \$0 and \$123 a month. Massachusetts residents over age 65, on the other hand, must have an income below \$1,366 per month and limited assets to access state assistance with premiums, and then pay Medicare premiums of \$300-\$400. This is not fair. One in five seniors in Massachusetts spends more than 20% of their income on healthcare and these high costs make it difficult to make ends meet. No one should have to choose between paying their housing costs, eating enough food, and paying for medications.

Healthcare costs continue to be a huge expense and challenge for many of our older residents.

BOSTON CITY HALL • ONE CITY HALL SQUARE • BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS • 02201  
617-635-4500 • boston.gov

I thank the members of both the House and Senate as well as Leadership and Governor Baker for your support and dedication to our older residents by extending Medicare Savings Program benefits to thousands of seniors with incomes below 165% of the Federal Poverty Level in the FY20 budget. This is a great first step and will help many of our residents.

But there is still more work to be done. Even with this expansion there are more older adults still in the gap who will not be covered under the Medicare Savings Program. I fully support H1199/S699, which would further increase eligibility to older adults with incomes under 200% by 2022. This is a top state legislative priority for me because of its potential positive impact for those who need all of the help we can provide. For every one dollar spent by the state, an additional \$7 in Federal matching funds and benefits would be leveraged. It is estimated that expansion to 200% of the Federal Poverty Line of the Medicare Savings Program would expand coverage to approximately 70,000 low-income seniors. Every single one of these dollars makes it easier for our older residents in the Commonwealth to stretch their budgets and ensures that people are able to get the healthcare they deserve.

I respectfully request your support of this bill and thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly or you may reach Alyssa Ring in the Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Relations at (617) 635-3817.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. J. Walsh', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Martin J. Walsh  
Mayor, City of Boston