



ROBERT W. WIRCH

STATE SENATOR TWENTY-SECOND DISTRICT

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Contact: Senator Bob Wirsch
(608) 267-8979

Prescription Drug Bill Has Right Intentions but Takes Wrong Way Getting There

Madison – Sen. Bob Wirsch (D-Somers) released the following statement today on a flawed bill (Senate Bill 263) to allow SeniorCare participants to receive 100 days’ worth of prescription medications at a time:

“Making and passing new laws isn’t always a straightforward, clear-cut process. There are times when legislators agree on an overall goal or concept but disagree on how to get there. This is one of those times. I fully support the idea of allowing those on SeniorCare to get a 100 day supply of their medications. It would save them money by reducing co-pays and make their day to day lives easier by reducing trips to the pharmacy. However, this bill as written is not going to get us where we want to go. The route the authors have chosen will require federal approval, which can take months or even years, if it is granted at all; it will actually increase the administrative costs of operating the SeniorCare program; and according to experts, applying this new standard only to SeniorCare participants could be costly, inefficient and very time consuming.

The state Department of Health Services (DHS) has made attempts to work with the bill’s authors to achieve the goals of the bill without having to face some of these roadblocks. In my view, the best way forward would be to extend the bill’s 100 day supply provision to all state residents on Medicaid, which includes SeniorCare. DHS could do this without federal approval, moving the timeline up considerably, with fewer administrative costs and benefiting more Wisconsin residents. It was my understanding that negotiations between DHS and the bill’s authors were ongoing, so I was particularly disappointed to see the bill scheduled for a committee vote before consensus had been reached.

We all agree on the goal. I’m hopeful that we can come to an agreement on how we get there.”

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State Capitol, P.O. Box 7882, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882 • (608) 267-8979

Toll-Free Office Hotline: 1-888-769-4724

Email: Sen.Wirsch@legis.state.wi.us • Website: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/senate/sen22/news> • Fax: (608) 267-0984
(262) 694-7379

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