

MULTNOMAH COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
PUBLIC TESTIMONY SIGN-UP

Please complete this form and return to the Board Clerk

\*\*\*This form is a public record\*\*\*

MEETING DATE: 8/19/2010

SUBJECT: HEALTH CARE

AGENDA NUMBER OR TOPIC:                     

FOR: — AGAINST: — THE ABOVE AGENDA ITEM

NAME: PAUL, ADOLPH, PHILLIPS

ADDRESS: 1212 S.W. CLAY

CITY/STATE/ZIP: PORTLAND OREGON 97201

PHONE: DAYS: —

EVEs: —

EMAIL: —

FAX: —

SPECIFIC ISSUE: SAME

WRITTEN TESTIMONY:                     

**IF YOU WISH TO ADDRESS THE BOARD:**

1. Please complete this form and return to the Board Clerk.
2. Address the County Commissioners from the presenter table microphones. Please limit your comments to **3 minutes**.
3. State your name for the official record.
4. If written documentation is presented, please furnish one copy to the Board Clerk.

**IF YOU WISH TO SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO THE BOARD:**

1. Please complete this form and return to the Board Clerk.
2. Written testimony will be entered into the official record.

2/1/1998 PART B  
Medicare

## Drug premiums to edge higher in 2011

WASHINGTON —Senior citizens will see a modest increase in their Medicare prescription premiums next year but benefits will also improve, federal health officials said Wednesday.

The average monthly premium charged by Medicare drug plans for standard coverage will rise to an estimated \$30 in 2011, an increase of \$1 over 2010, or about 3 percent, Medicare Administrator Don Berwick said.

But because Medicare drug plans vary widely in coverage and costs, consumer advocates cautioned that seniors need to check their particular plan to avoid unpleasant surprises that may not be revealed in such a broad estimate of average premiums.

Nonetheless, seniors with high drug costs can look forward to a noticeable improve-

### 27 million

Beneficiaries signed up for the prescription benefit, delivered through private insurance companies

ment next year.

That's because the new health care law will begin to close the coverage gap known as the doughnut hole. Medicare recipients in the gap will get a 50 percent discount on brand-name drugs, and 7 percent off on generics. The discounts will gradually increase until the gap closes in 2020.

"These very modest increases in premiums, along with the new discounts ... are going to make medications more affordable to Medicare beneficiaries," Berwick said.

About 27 million beneficiaries are signed up for the prescription benefit, delivered through private insurance companies. The premium estimate released by Medicare on Wednesday represents only the broadest measure of pocketbook impact.

In practice, Medicare prescription plans vary widely in costs and benefits. Standard coverage that Medicare's premium estimates are based on remains the exception. Consumer advocates recommend that seniors and family members use Medicare's online plan finder to see which insurer provides the best deal for an individual's medications.

"It's always good news when premiums don't go up by leaps and bounds, but seniors in some of the most popular plans may see higher premiums," said Tricia Neuman, the top Medi-

care expert at the Kaiser Family Foundation. "They need to check their plans so they don't have unpleasant surprises."

Premiums can vary by tenfold or more.

In Baltimore, for example, 45 Medicare drug plans are available with premiums ranging from less than \$12 to more than \$120 a month. And that doesn't take into account deductibles and co-payments, or whether a plan provides some coverage in the doughnut hole.

Then there's another factor to consider: Medicare Advantage plans that combine prescription and medical coverage may be a better deal overall for some people than traditional Medicare. Nationally, about 9 million beneficiaries are getting their drug coverage through such plans.

— The Associated Press