

Hello, my name is Bea Stratton and I am a member of the Medicare Task Force and AFSCME Retirees Subchapter 88.

I personally feel very strongly about the need to fix Part D because I am struggling in the Donut Hole right now. I fell into the Donut Hole during June of last year and I fell in even sooner during May of this year. Once my prescription drugs costs reached \$2,510 (which includes both what Health Alliance paid and what I paid in co-pays) they dropped my coverage and I now have to pay 100% of my prescription drug costs. Health Alliance will not pick me back up until I pay \$4,050 more out of my own pocket. Keep in mind that I still have to pay them a monthly premium even for the months that they are not helping with my drug costs at all.

Even though I am spending \$300-\$600 out of pocket every month for my prescription drugs, I have never been able pay myself out of the Donut Hole. I just have to wait until next year when coverage starts over in January, knowing that I only have a few months before I fall into the Donut Hole again. So, for 7 months this year, Health Alliance is getting paid by me and the federal government, using tax payer dollars, for literally doing nothing. Talk about a deal for them! In the meantime, I on the other hand, am trying to work with my doctor to find other ways to control my diabetes because I cannot afford the drugs that I need.

My story is just one of millions of seniors suffering from the problems with Part D all over the country. We have seen what the private insurance companies have to offer. It's time to try something new, by creating a Medicare-administered drug plan that negotiates for lower drug prices, increases consumer protections, and eliminates the Donut Hole.

Medicare has been providing access to health care that is universal, uniform, simple, and dependable to all seniors and people with disabilities regardless of their income, health status, or where they live for over 40 years now. Congress should use this history of success as an example of

how to create a REAL prescription drug benefit that, like Medicare, is easy-to-use, provides guaranteed coverage, and is cost-effective.

Because Congress created Medicare Part D, they are the only ones who can pass the legislation necessary to fix it. That is why it is so important for us to elect legislators who understand where Part D is failing and be willing to fight for seniors' health by introducing and co-sponsoring legislation that will fix those problems.

The Medicare Task Force sent out this Part D Candidate Survey so that we can educate voters about where the Candidates running for Senate and the House of Representatives for Illinois and District 15 stand on Part D reform. Now Anne will take you through our survey and how the candidates responded.