



Testimony of Matt Netto, AARP Rhode Island
In Support of House Bills 5431, 5494, 5499
House Health and Human Services Committee
April 10, 2025

Chairwoman Donovan and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

On behalf of AARP Rhode Island and our 125,000+ members in Rhode Island, I am pleased to express strong support for House Bills 5431, 5499, and 5494, which would provide all Medicare recipients over sixty-five (65) years of age who apply for Medicare supplement plan guaranteed issue rights. These bills also require that the issuance or coverage of any Medicare supplement plan would not be conditioned on the medical or health status or receipt of health care by the applicant.

Medicare Supplement rules ordinarily do not ensure access to Medigap coverage outside the initial open enrollment period or designated guaranteed issue periods. During the initial enrollment period, Medigap is guaranteed to issue a policy. But under current law, if beneficiaries disenroll from a Medicare Advantage plan to change to Traditional Medicare, they may not be able to buy Medigap coverage. Or it may cost more. Policies may be medically underwritten if not purchased during the open enrollment or guaranteed issue periods. This complicates the decision to switch from Medicare Advantage to original Medicare.

It is AARP policy that lawmakers should put traditional Medicare, Medicare Advantage plans, and retiree health plans on a level playing field. They can do this by making all Medigap products available without regard to health status for Medicare beneficiaries who are switching from a Medicare Advantage plan into traditional Medicare. Currently, four states (CT, MA, ME, NY) require either continuous or annual guaranteed issue protections for Medigap for all beneficiaries ages 65 and older, regardless of medical history.

AARP Rhode Island supports these bills as they will put these plans on a level playing field. These bills would also benefit people already enrolled in Medigap, as they would also be able to switch Medigap plans/carriers without medical underwriting. These bills provide greater choice and flexibility for everyone, not just Medicare Advantage enrollees. House Bill 5494 and House Bill 5499 go further by requiring that an issuer shall not utilize gender, attained-age, or issue-age as a part of its rating structure or methodology. Community rating shall be the only rating methodology permitted for any Medicare supplement policies or applicable certificates issued.

AARP Rhode Island respectfully suggests an amendment to House Bill 5494. The suggested edit would be on page 3, subsection (h) line 24. We suggest deleting "for a period of at least thirty (30) days beginning on the individual's birthday" and replacing it with "during any Medicare

Advantage eligible enrollment period". The result of this proposed edit would comply with CMS rules/regulations as well as allow everyone, regardless of their birthday month, to change from a Medicare Advantage plan to a Medicare Supplement plan annually without underwriting.

AARP's mission is to empower people to choose how they live as they age. An important part of that empowerment is the ability to move from a Medicare Advantage plan to traditional Medicare with Medigap if doing so best meets their health and financial needs. These bills would ensure that doing so is not out of reach for Medicare beneficiaries. House Bill 5499 or House Bill 5494 are the two strongest bills in our opinion; however, House Bill 5431 would also make good progress.

Please take this important step to ensure that older Rhode Islanders have the coverage they require to meet their medical needs at the most affordable price possible. We respectfully ask you to recommend passage on one of these important pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Matt Netto". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Matt Netto
Associate State Director - Advocacy, AARP Rhode Island