

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Statement of Congressman Mike Michaud  
Clover Manor, Auburn, Maine**

In the days and weeks ahead, there will be critical actions taken on the proposed Medicare prescription drug benefit. When the House of Representatives passed this legislation in July, I could not vote for it because it contained many provisions that would actually hurt Maine seniors. It is important that Mainers get some straight talk on the issues at hand.

One such harmful provision is “premium support”, which is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to privatize Medicare by 2010, by phasing out the traditional fee-for-service plan and replacing it with a voucher program. The proposed plan is also run completely by private insurance companies, and because there is no fallback provision, there is no guarantee that a plan will be established in rural areas like Maine. Proponents of these provisions want to create competition between private plans and Medicare to provide “choice”. However, it is clear that the only choice that will be made will be by the private insurance companies choosing not to serve rural areas. Where does this leave our seniors? Out in the cold without a benefit.

A third major problem is the rising cost of prescription drugs. We all know that drugs prices are spiraling out of control, yet the bill passed by the House expressly prohibits the secretary of Health and Human Services from ever negotiating for lower prices, the way the Maine Rx law proposes to do. This is simply backward.

Any Medicare prescription drug bill passed into law should make drugs more affordable, provide greater protection for lower income beneficiaries, and guarantee coverage for rural Americans, not make a thinly veiled attempt to privatize Medicare and abandon rural seniors. I will continue to fight for a real prescription drug benefit. I will not vote for a plan that hurts Maine seniors. Thank you.

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