

~~WHEREAS, Medicare plus Choice managed care plans have benefits that are not included in the federal Medicare benefit package, including prescription drugs; and~~

WHEREAS, An increasing number of Maryland's senior citizens who live on fixed incomes are experiencing difficulties in meeting the cost of life-sustaining prescription drugs; and

WHEREAS, The cost of providing Medicare plus Choice managed care benefits that provided prescription drug coverage exceeded the income from premiums for these programs and thus caused managed care organizations to leave fourteen counties and medically underserved areas counties and portions of counties in Maryland; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland General Assembly recognizes the need to encourage managed care organizations to return to those counties in Maryland that have no Medicare plus Choice managed care or are designated as medically underserved areas by the federal Health Care Financing Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services; and ensure that all Maryland residents have access to prescription drugs in order to maintain the optimal level of health possible for Maryland citizens; and

WHEREAS, It is the intent of the Maryland General Assembly to provide an incentive to Managed Care Organizations to provide Medicare plus Choice programs to seniors in those areas who have no Medicare managed care or are in medically underserved areas; and

~~WHEREAS, A subsidy to offset the premium cost for seniors who have no Medicare managed care~~ find a temporary means of providing prescription drug benefits to its senior citizens who have no prescription drug benefits in those counties or portions of counties that are medically underserved and have no managed care prescription drug benefits available; and

WHEREAS, It is the intent of the Maryland General Assembly to fund the prescription drug benefits plan with a portion of the approved purchaser differential received under § 15-606 of the Insurance Article by carriers who provide substantial, affordable, and available health care coverage programs; and

WHEREAS, Providing a short-term prescription drug program for Maryland's senior citizens will have a long term beneficial effect on the cost of public health in Maryland; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows: