

IN OPPOSITION TO PHARMACY CUTS IN THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

My name is Betty Brandt, & I'm a ConnPACE member from Fairfield.

The Governor's proposed budget will have a devastating impact on the ability of seniors & people with disabilities to access medications under ConnPACE, & also to qualify for the ConnPACE Program!

First, the State would randomly enroll ConnPACE recipients in cheaper, benchmark Medicare Part D Plans, which cover fewer drugs. Since different Part D plans cover different drugs, many people will be in plans that won't pay for some of their needed medications!

In addition, the new budget won't cover these Medicare non-formulary prescriptions! This is gambling with the health of vulnerable seniors & people with disabilities, who have life-threatening conditions: diabetes, heart problems, & respiratory, kidney & psychiatric conditions. Also, under Federal law, Medicare drug plans don't pay for tranquilizers at all.

Third, for the first time, the State will include psychiatric medications on the DSS Preferred Drug List. This means that many drugs that work well for people's mental health conditions will no longer be available to them. Consumers who have been stabilized on these medications will decompensate & flood our emergency rooms & local hospital beds. What a preventable tragedy!

Fourth, the budget would require prior authorization (PA) for high cost prescriptions. PA is very difficult to obtain, so many confused seniors & people with disabilities would leave the pharmacy empty-handed. Too often, PA means never

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getting the medication at all!

Finally, other drastic measures would greatly restrict eligibility for the ConnPACE Program. The State would weed out vulnerable seniors & people with disabilities through an asset test with a very low threshold. Other ways of excluding people from ConnPACE would involve restricting the Program's Open Enrollment Period to the last 6 weeks of the year, & increasing the annual registration fee by 50%. Even a small cost increase would be a prohibitive obstacle to ConnPACE membership for many people.

These very limiting drug-access restrictions & the new ConnPACE eligibility requirements would put our vulnerable seniors & people with disabilities, who have life-threatening conditions, at great risk! I strongly urge you to reject these budget proposals.

Thank you for giving me the chance to express my views today.