

WALDORF, MD - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) today visited NorthGate Pharmacy in Waldorf to hear local community pharmacists' concerns about the flawed implementation of Medicare Part D, the Republican prescription drug benefit which took effect this year.

In a recent national survey of nearly 6,000 pharmacists, including 64 in Maryland, only 2 percent of respondents called the new prescription drug program "a success."

"It is well documented that seniors have been forced to grapple with a system so confusing and complicated that many still cannot navigate their way through the program," Hoyer said. "Yet it has gone somewhat unnoticed that community pharmacies have been bearing the brunt of this flawed prescription drug law.

When the new program took effect in January of this year, many pharmacists reported spending countless hours on the phone trying to sort out problems both with the various drug plans and the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services, rather than letting low-income beneficiaries be forced to leave without their medicines.

"Pharmacies like mine are struggling with this new law," said Vincent Ippolito of NorthGate Pharmacy. "If these problems are not corrected soon, I simply will not be able to afford participation in a number of the Medicare Part D plans."

In addition to operational challenges, pharmacies serving Medicare Part D enrollees are facing serious financial difficulties posed by the many problems with the new program, and often slow reimbursements.

"This law is wearing down the community pharmacy infrastructure," Hoyer said. "Congress must take action to ensure that Northgate Pharmacy and others like it are treated in a fair manner. The future of these community businesses is critical to the well-being of all Americans."

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