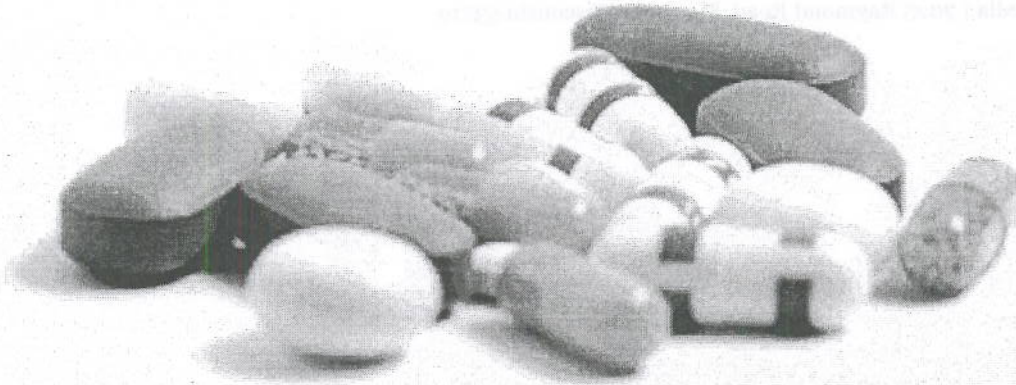




Walker says SeniorCare plan about getting feds to pay

Proposal in Walker's budget

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MADISON, Wis. -

Gov. Scott Walker says his plan to require SeniorCare participants to first sign up for Medicare Part D isn't about changing benefits, it's about getting the federal government to pay for part of the costs.

Walker resurrected the plan in his budget released this week. The Legislature rejected the idea in 2011 under bipartisan opposition.

Walker said Thursday that his plan would keep the structure of SeniorCare in place and not eliminate or affect benefits people receive. The proposal would save the state \$15 million over two years.

"Right now, the way SeniorCare is running, we don't get any benefit from the federal government like they do in states all across the country," Walker said.

Walker's argument on SeniorCare comes at the same time he defends rejecting federal money to pay for expansion of Medicaid, arguing that the federal government can't be relied on to fulfill its obligations.

The potential cuts have raised concerns for Rep. Andy Jorgensen, D-Milton, who is worried that the proposal could hurt seniors in the long run and leave them unable to pay for necessary medication.

"He is going to cut the program by 40 percent. He is going to defund it to the tune of \$15 million, and he is going to push people onto Medicare Part D," Jorgensen said. "SeniorCare works for the people and it works for the taxpayers."

"We want people to take the Medicare Part D components so the federal government pays for that part. The part that we grant under SeniorCare that goes beyond that, we'll pay. So it's not about changing benefits, it's ultimately about changing who pays for it," Walker said.

Jorgensen said Wisconsin is the only state that has the ability to negotiate with drug companies to bring prices down.

"Gov. Walker is siding with the big drug companies, not with grandma and grandpa," Jorgensen said.

Jorgensen hopes a petition against the proposal will get some attention at the Capitol.

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