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# Allen, Baldacci submit bill to ensure drug discounts

● Their proposal seeks to protect Maine's right to provide lower prices for those without drug coverage.

*The Associated Press*

Maine's two congressmen have introduced a bill to preserve a new state program that reduces prescription drug prices for low- and moderate-income residents who don't have insurance.

Democratic Reps. Tom Allen and John Baldacci filed a measure on Tuesday that is similar to one submitted earlier this month by Maine Republican Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, and independent Sen. James Jeffords of Vermont.

Maine's program utilizes a waiver issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide medication at discount prices for people without prescription drug coverage who would not otherwise qualify for Medicaid benefits.

In Maine, 145,000 people lack health insurance and thousands more do not have insurance to cover prescription drugs, according to Allen and Baldacci.

The Maine Legislature enacted a law this spring authorizing the Healthy Maine Prescriptions program.

Maine and Vermont have the only drug-pricing programs of their kind approved by the federal government.

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America has sued the federal government to overturn the waivers issued to Maine and Vermont. An injunction has been issued to stop Vermont's program.

Allen's and Baldacci's bill would clarify the federal government's authority to approve waivers that allow the lower drug prices.

Their bill was introduced days after President Bush proposed a discount prescription drug program, in which elderly Americans would receive pharmacy cards to buy prescription medicines at a discount.

Bush's program is also being challenged in court by two groups that represent pharmacies, The Washington Post reported Wednesday.

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores and the National Community Pharmacy Association sued on Tuesday in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The lawsuit seeks a court order to block the program.