

More than 46 million Americans, including 16 million children, are living in poverty. Here in central New Jersey, 56,000 people lack health insurance, and 33,000 households must send their children to bed hungry. These are not simply statistics; these are our co-workers, our friends, and our neighbors.

I have always believed that the best anti-poverty program is a job, and efforts to solve the poverty crisis must go hand in hand with efforts to solve the jobs crisis. Yet even as we work to get the economy back on track, we must also find ways to help our neighbors who are struggling today.

According to statistics compiled by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, our social safety net programs – including Social Security, Medicare, food stamps, student aid, and unemployment insurance – are right now cutting America’s poverty rate from 29 to 15 percent. This success has made America a fairer and more secure place to live, and just as importantly, it has made our economy more resilient by pumping federal support into our hardest-hit communities.

By preserving and expanding the most effective programs in our safety net and by making the investments necessary to create jobs today and in the future, we can lift millions of our neighbors out of poverty and keep the American Dream alive for all.

Recognizing the Hard Work of Family Caregivers

In New Jersey alone, there are over 1 million individuals who serve as unpaid caregivers to loved ones living with a disability, chronic illness, or other condition. Their numbers are likely to grow in the years to come, as more seniors need care and more Americans join the “sandwich generation”: individuals who are providing care for their children and parents at the same time.

Caregiving is not an easy task. According to a 2004 study, caregivers are twice as likely as non-caregivers to report physical and mental health complications. Along with the high physical and emotional costs of caregiving, there are economic costs as well: MetLife has estimated that caregivers sacrifice \$34 billion in economic productivity each year to care for their loved ones.

I am working in Congress to provide our caregivers with the necessary tools – like respite care, a reauthorized Older Americans Act, and tax credits for care expenses – that they need to continue caring for loved ones.

Helping Seniors Afford Prescription Drugs

In today's challenging economy, many seniors are finding it difficult to afford the cost of prescription drugs. If your income is less than \$16,335 (\$22,065 for a married couple) and your assets excluding your home and car are less than \$12,640 (\$25,260 for a married couple), I encourage you to apply for Extra Help from the Social Security Administration.

For eligible seniors, up to \$4,000 per year may be available to help pay monthly premiums and annual deductibles and lower the prescription co-payments related to their plan.

To find out more, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/ or call 1-800-772-1213 and asking for Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs. As always, please contact me if you are having trouble with a government agency or need help cutting through red tape.

Sincerely,

Rush Holt
Member of Congress