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**Paul Peyton**  
 ASSIGNMENT EDITOR  
**Suzette F. Stalker**  
 COMMUNITY  
**Christina M. Hinke**  
 EDUCATION & ARTS

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## Prescription Legislation Offers Some Relief to Chronically Ill

Bipartisan legislation approved last week by the New Jersey Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee promises to ease the financial burden for those with chronic medical conditions by limiting out-of-pocket costs for prescription medications.

Senate Republican Leader Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21st, Westfield) is a primary sponsor of the bill, S-1865. Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg (D-37th, Linden) also is a primary sponsor. Identical legislation, A-2431, previously passed in the state Assembly. Among the co-sponsors of the Assembly version of the legislation were Republican Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) and Assemblywoman Nancy Muñoz (R-21st, Summit).

According to a statement outlining the provisions of S-1865, the bill "requires certain health insurers, under certain policies or contracts that provide coverage for prescription drugs, to place limitations on covered persons' cost sharing for prescription drugs." The statement can be found online at njleg.state.nj.us.

"Patients battling cancer and other chronic diseases have a tough enough time before they face the challenge of paying for expensive treatments and prescriptions, which can cost thousands of dollars a month or more," Senator Kean remarked in a December 5 press release announcing the Senate committee's advancement of the bill.

"Many other states have succeeded in limiting these outrageous fees for necessary prescriptions. Our efforts to make co-pays more affordable for life-saving prescriptions is the right thing to do," he added.

The legislation calls for a maximum out-of-pocket cost of \$200 per prescription for those covered under the Affordable Care Act's Bronze Level Plan, and \$100 per prescription for all other insured plans, as stated in the press release.

We applaud the efforts of our state legislators from both sides of the aisle in sponsoring and advancing legislation that will benefit many New Jersey residents.

As Senator Kean noted, individuals living with chronic illnesses typically face multiple daily challenges beyond pharmaceutical costs. In addition to the normal anxiety accompanying any serious illness, patients and their loved ones often wrestle with worries over how their health will impact their ability to work or to care for their children or aged family members. They may need assistance in getting to doctor or treatment appointments or may be dealing with side effects from treatments. We hope that this legislation limiting prescription costs will provide some relief to those who already are coping with so much.

## New Jersey Should Not Allow Districts to Exceed 2-Percent Cap

Legislation is being pushed through the lame-duck session of the New Jersey State Legislature that would let dozens of school districts exceed the state's 2-percent cap. The bill, sponsored by Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3rd, Gloucester), however, might be dead on arrival as Governor Phil Murphy is opposed to it.

The legislation, S-4289, would allow certain districts to exceed the cap from 2020-2021 through 2024-2025. The bill was introduced and approved by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee on December 5. Mr. Sweeney said the bill was introduced to help districts that lost aid under Senate Bill 2, which cut aid to districts deemed over-funded and redistributed aid to under-funded districts. About 200 school districts saw state aid fall under the formula changes, according to news reports.

According to news reports, 40 districts would be eligible to exceed the 2-percent cap under the legislation. Some districts are said to have lost millions of dollars in aid under the state's revamped funding system. These districts are said to be Toms River, Brick, Old Bridge, Leonia, South Amboy and the Central Regional School District in Ocean County. Toms River parents want Gov. Murphy to give the district \$4.4 million in emergency aid so the district can avoid further reductions to staff and programs.

"We're not looking to hurt districts as we're trying to fix the school funding formula. It's the districts that are under adequacy funding now, which means they have room to increase," Sen. Sweeney told

reporters at the Statehouse, according to a politico.com report.

Senator Declan O'Scanlon (R-13th, Holmdel) told 101.5 FM that he is opposed to the legislation, saying under current law districts have the option to go to the voters and ask to exceed the cap.

"Going to the voters is how we designed the cap to begin with," Sen. O'Scanlon said.

Gov. Murphy also ripped the bill. "Let's fix the gimmicks in Trenton, not raise property taxes," he said on Twitter. The Governor, instead, is pushing for a millionaires tax as well as raising the sales tax back to 7 percent, both of which Mr. Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin (D-19th, Woodbridge) oppose.

"Raising taxes wouldn't give these districts that are losing money one penny more," Sen. Sweeney responded, according to the northjersey.com report.

We strongly oppose allowing districts to exceed the 2-percent cap. New Jersey already has among the highest property taxes in the country, and school and county taxes are the main reason for that here in Union County. Creating a millionaires tax and raising the state's sales tax also are bad ideas. The millionaires tax will just lead to more wealthy people leaving the state, while a sales tax hike will hurt businesses, especially those in our downtowns that are already struggling to make a profit.

If school boards want to exceed the cap, they should put it on the ballot and let their voters decide.



## It's Dark Now And Pedestrians Encounter Increased Danger

Winter and daylight savings time result in gray afternoons and dark evenings in our area. Night approaches quickly this time of the year. The end of December will be here very shortly, and this is the shortest daytime of the year. Many don't adjust well to this sudden change in loss of daylight. When everyone leaves work during this time of year, it's dark. It's hard to see while driving and it's particularly hard to see pedestrians.

Pedestrians also don't see very well, aren't as aware as they need to be, and assume drivers see them. This condition has resulted in unfortunate pedestrian deaths over the last few years. The busy local thoroughfares, such as North Avenue and East Broad Street in Westfield, have proven to be particularly dangerous. Martine and Park Avenues in Scotch Plains are equally busy. These streets are uniquely laden with both cars and pedestrians. It's the most dangerous combination - many cars, many pedestrians and dark evenings.

We appeal to everyone to be extremely alert - drivers and pedestrians both. There's more everyone can do to help avoid tragedy. Please wear bright colored and reflective clothing while walking. Cross on streets only where it is legal and safe. Please do

not "J-Walk!" Every time you cross the street, assume that drivers don't see you because they probably don't. Take the time to remind your children to always cross at the crosswalks, and if you're thinking about buying yourself or the kids new winter coats, try to buy bright colors. Drivers, in their normal rush to get home, should remember how unsafe it is this time of year. Expect pedestrians to do unusual things because they will.

Remember not to pass on the right through the leaf piles, as children may be at play. As the winter weather rolls in, ice and snow are bound to make road conditions worse; take it slow and stay alert. Joggers and bicyclists need to be more on guard, too, because of the diminished visibility. Make sure the reflectors on your bicycles are cleaned off and in good condition. Both joggers and cyclists should consider purchasing and wearing a blinking light to make them more visible.

Please remember that many "out of town" cars pass through the area all the time. These drivers do not know the conditions of our local roads or the busyness of pedestrian travel. They won't be as alert as you. We'd like to hear your suggestions on this issue. Let's make our wintertime as safe as possible this year by staying alert.

## Letters to the Editor

### Westfield Board Of Health Meeting December 2 Canceled Due to Snow

The board's plan to regulate electronic smoking devices will be delayed, since the proposed ordinance must be reintroduced when the new board convenes in January. However, we will move on an accelerated track. The recommended plan would regulate the sale of these devices in town, primarily to eliminate their use by children.

The use of these nicotine-addicting products among children is exploding, according to the Centers for the Disease Control and Prevention. In a recent survey, over half of high school students and almost one-fourth of middle school students in the United States reported ever using any tobacco product. E-cigarettes were the most commonly ever used tobacco product among these students overall.

Influenza is spreading in New Jersey and the seasonal influenza vaccination campaign is underway. A simple vaccination can help prevent the flu. Good health habits, like covering your cough, washing your hands and staying home from school or work when sick, can also help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu. Residents can find information on influenza and local vaccination sites at the Westfield Regional Health Department's website <https://www.westfieldnj.gov/health> in the Seasonal Information tab.

Residents should also prepare now for the next severe weather emergency. Make or restock your disaster supply kit with at least a three days supply: 1) water, one gallon per person per day; 2) nonperishable food; 3) medications; and 4) flashlight and radio, with batteries. Also, develop a plan to aid family members, take care of pets, and safely shut off utilities.

If you will use a portable generator, locate it in a well-ventilated space AWAY from your house. Have your heating system checked and have a functioning battery-operated carbon monoxide alarm in your home. Carbon monoxide from a generator or heater can initially cause headache, nausea and dizziness and can be deadly.

The Health Department was awarded a \$95,000 "Strengthening Local Public Health Capacity" competitive grant by the New Jersey Department of Health. The funds will be used to implement an enhanced communicable disease control program with dedicated staff to focus on preventing and controlling infectious diseases in children in our community.

Information about all of the Health Department's activities, including helpful health-related advice and recommendations, such as concerning e-cigarettes and screening programs, and free education programs, is available at <https://www.westfieldnj.gov/health>. Recent topics in the department's monthly newsletter, Your Health Matters, include having a safe holiday, gun safety and emergency preparedness. It is available on the department's website in the December Newsletter tab. You can sign up to receive Health Department information through <https://>

[www.westfieldnj.gov/townupdates](http://www.westfieldnj.gov/townupdates).

At this time of year, we want to thank the staff and senior staff of the Westfield Regional Health Department for their dedication, commitment and work all year on behalf of public health in Westfield and our neighboring communities. The senior staff includes Megan Avallone, RN, MS, the health officer and director; Laura Scanlon, RN, the public health nursing supervisor, and Helen Mendez, the principal registered environmental health specialist.

In addition, I thank the volunteer members of the Board of Health for their time and assistance and for sharing their wisdom and insights this past year. They are Elizabeth Talmont, MSN, APN-BC, vice-president, Sharon Dorry, RN, Dr. Vasilios Diamantopoulos, Dr. Steve Gorelick, Dr. Andrea Marcus, Thomas K. O'Neill, Dr. Denise Rizzolo and Dr. David Weinman, and JoAnn Neylan, our council liaison. I also thank Mayor Shelley Brindle and Jim Gildea, town administrator, for their strong support.

The complete minutes of the November 4 meeting will be posted after review and approval at our January 13, 2020, reorganization meeting, which starts at 5 p.m. in the municipal building. The public is invited to attend.

**Lawrence Budnick, MD, MPH**  
 President, Westfield Board of Health

## Consider Making A Holiday Gift To The Westfield United Fund

The Season of Giving is here, and we at the Westfield United Fund would like to ask the residents of Westfield to consider making a holiday gift to the WUF. For many years, the fund has been supported by members of the community, but over the last few years we have seen a drop in support as older residents retire and move away. However, the needs of the people we serve have not diminished, and every dollar counts!

The Westfield United Fund is the perfect solution for busy people who want to support worthwhile programs helping people in need in our community. We do the due diligence so that you can be confident that your donations will be put to efficient use. Even a small contribution can have a big impact! For example, \$50 will pay for a week's worth of meals (twice a day) for a homebound person, or two counseling sessions for a child or family in crisis.

Other programs include childcare for low-income families, literacy tutoring for adults, home

**Union County Freeholders**  
 Elizabeth, New Jersey  
 (908) 527-4200  
 Ed Oatman, Mgr., [eoatman@ucnj.org](mailto:eoatman@ucnj.org)  
 Bette Kowalski, chair  
[bkowalski@ucnj.org](mailto:bkowalski@ucnj.org)  
 Sebastian D'Elia, Public Info.  
 (908) 527-4419  
[sdelia@ucnj.org](mailto:sdelia@ucnj.org)

<b>State LD-21</b> Sen. Thomas Kean, Jr. (R) 425 North Ave. E. Westfield, N.J. 07090 (908) 232-3673 Asm. Jon Bramnick (R) 251 North Ave. West Westfield, N.J. 07090 (908) 232-2073 Asm. Nancy Munoz (R) 57 Union Place, Suite 310 Summit, N.J. 07901 (908) 918-0414	<b>State LD-22</b> Sen. Nicholas Scutari (D) 1514 E. Saint Georges Ave. Linden, N.J. 07036 (908) 587-0404 Asm. Jim Kennedy (D) 34 E. Cherry St. Rahway, N.J. 07065 (732) 943-2660 Asw. Linda Carter (D) 200 West 2nd St., Suite 102 Plainfield, N.J. 07060 (908) 561-5757	<b>7th Congressional District</b> Representative Tom Malinowski (D) 58 East Main St, Somerville, N.J. 08876 (908) 547-3307 [Westfield, Mountainside, Garwood, Summit and Cranford are in the 7th Congressional District]
<b>LD-21</b> includes Westfield, Mountainside, Garwood, Summit and Cranford.	<b>LD-22</b> includes Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Plainfield, Clark, Rahway and Linden.	<b>12th Congressional District</b> Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D) 850 Bear Tavern Road, Suite 201, Ewing, N.J. 08628 (609) 883-0026 [Fanwood, Plainfield and most of Scotch Plains are in the 12th Congressional District]

[senkean@njleg.org](mailto:senkean@njleg.org), [senscutari@njleg.org](mailto:senscutari@njleg.org)  
[asmbrannick@njleg.org](mailto:asmbrannick@njleg.org), [aswmunoz@njleg.org](mailto:aswmunoz@njleg.org)  
[asmkennedy@njleg.org](mailto:asmkennedy@njleg.org), [aswcarter@njleg.org](mailto:aswcarter@njleg.org)



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions - only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly - good guess. If you get two - well-read individual. If you get three - word expert. If you get all four - You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

**Answers to last week's arcane words.**  
 1. Zaptiah - A Turkish policeman  
 2. Apraxia - Loss or impairment of power to perform purposeful movements  
 3. Zander - The European pike  
 4. Tatouay - A large South American armadillo

**PLATYHERIC**  
 1. Having a flat or broad sacrum  
 2. A ridge having a flat top; plateau, mesa  
 3. Consisting of many ethnic cultures  
 4. Universal wisdom

**HAEMATOPHILINA**  
 1. The transformation of blood in the lungs from venous blood to arterial blood  
 2. Excessive interest in butterflies and moths  
 3. Blood-sucking vampire bats  
 4. In botany, a sickle-shaped cyme

**HAKEEM**  
 1. A revered Moslem scholar  
 2. A Moslem doctor  
 3. A Moslem prince  
 4. An Arabic nomadic leader

**BEKAH**  
 1. The prickly pear  
 2. A marsh at a river's mouth  
 3. A given site or location  
 4. One half a shekel

**Letters to the Editor**  
 The Deadline is Monday 9 AM for publication on the coming Thursday. The size limit is 200-500 words.

All The News



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Letters to the Editor

healthcare for the elderly, programs for disabled children and adults, and counseling for victims of domestic violence. Please donate what you can so that we can continue to provide these critical services to the people in our community who need them. Go to [westfieldunitedfund.org](http://westfieldunitedfund.org) and click on the Donate tab. Thank you!

**Jon Walker**  
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