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Bill could make more prescriptions available

The Legislature may allow nursing homes and other facilities to donate drugs in sealed containers.

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That could help low-income Idahoans who cannot afford some medications to begin receiving them, supporters say. The effort could grow in upcoming years to include an ever-increasing number of Idahoans who struggle to pay for expensive medications.

Here are key points about SB1109, sponsored by Sen. Les Bock, D-Boise.

THE WINNERS

Low-income patients at clinics run by Genesis World Mission and Terry Reilly Health Services could get drugs out of their financial

reach. Many medicines that do not have generic versions cost hundreds of dollars for a month's supply.

Earth: Drugs don't have to be thrown away, which reduces possible pollution.

THE LOSERS:

None known, and no state money is required, Bock said.

WHAT PEOPLE THINK

Steven Reames, executive director of Genesis, is excited about the bill and looks forward to a time when some assisted-living centers can be added to the mix.

"They are throwing tens of thousands of drugs away

every year," Reames said. "It's a huge waste and could go to a great use."

OTHER KEY POINTS

Medicaid already does this: The public health insurance program for the poor or disabled already saves money by getting back some of the medicines prescribed for Medicaid patients who move, die or quit taking expensive drugs. So the new law wouldn't apply to prescriptions under Idaho's Medicaid program. It would apply to drugs purchased by employer-sponsored or other insurance.

Assisted living centers excluded: The bill was amended to exclude assisted living centers, at least for this year, to allow time

for facility officials to sort out how they will comply with the bill, as some may keep better track of medications than others.

Rules would follow: If the bill passes, the state Board of Pharmacy will write rules intended to ensure that the bill wouldn't violate laws against giving one person's prescription to someone else.

WHAT'S NEXT

The bill passed the Senate unanimously on Thursday. It's now awaiting a vote of the full House.

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 **READ THE BILL SB1109**
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