



Prescription Drug Affordability Board

Summary: Drugs don't work if people can't afford them. Due to skyrocketing costs, 1 in 4 of Americans say they have difficulty affording their prescription medications.¹ Health insurance premiums are going up while at the same time public health agencies are struggling to afford drugs like naloxone and medications to cure Hepatitis C.² Meanwhile drug corporations spend billions more dollars on advertising than they do on research.³ Other developed nations pay much less for their prescription drugs than the United States because they negotiate with drug manufacturers.⁴ Maryland needs to create a Prescription Drug Affordability Board which would examine the entire drug supply chain for very high-cost drugs and then establish fair and reasonable costs for those drugs in Maryland.

Is there significant impact on public health in Maryland? Skyrocketing drug costs have a significant impact on public health in Maryland in three ways: 1) People cannot afford their medications, 2) Health insurance premiums are rising, and 3) Public health agencies cannot afford enough important medications such as naloxone which saves lives from opioid overdoses. Please see the attachment for more information.

What are the major, most compelling reasons we want to support this issue? Drugs don't work if people can't afford them and one in four Americans say they have difficulty affording their prescription medications.⁵ Other developed nations pay much less for their prescription drugs than the United States because they negotiate with drug manufacturers.⁶ This is wrong. We need a Prescription Drug Affordability Board to determine fair and reasonable costs for prescription drugs.

Is the current political climate conducive to moving this issue forward at this time? 132 candidates for General Assembly and gubernatorial candidate Ben Jealous support this proposal. Polling by OpinionWorks shows that Marylanders overwhelmingly support the creation of a Prescription Drug Affordability Board.⁷

Would we have credible partners with whom to coalesce? Over 200 health, business, labor, faith, and community organizations in the Health Care for All! Coalition, including MdPHA, have signed our resolution to support this proposal.

Is this the first time this bill will be introduced in Maryland? Would there be parties working against us? What are their arguments? What are their resources? During the past legislative session the main opponents of this proposal were pharmaceutical corporations and the Maryland Tech Council. Pharmaceutical corporations have significant resources, spending \$277 million in lobbying last year in the U.S.⁸ They argued that prices are high because of research. However, we know that pharmaceutical corporations spend billions more dollars on advertising than they do on research and development.⁹ The Maryland Tech Council argued that jobs would leave Maryland. However, we know that more than half of the biggest pharmaceutical corporations have their headquarters in nations with their own versions of the Prescription Drug Affordability Board. Some patient groups expressed concerns about the proposal, but we also know that patient advocacy groups accept large amounts of money from Big Pharma.¹⁰

Is there an MdPHA member who is willing to lead on this issue? Stephanie Klapper would like to lead on this issue. Stephanie is an MdPHA member and Deputy Director at Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative.

¹ <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/fact-sheet/proposed-changes-to-public-charge-policies-for-immigrants-implications-for-health-coverage/>

² <http://healthcareforall.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/True-Cost-of-Rx.pdf>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wnk/wp/2015/02/11/big-pharmaceutical-companies-are-spending-far-more-on-marketing-than-research/>

⁴ <https://www.goodrx.com/blog/why-are-prescription-drugs-more-expensive-in-the-us-than-in-other-countries/>

⁵ <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/fact-sheet/proposed-changes-to-public-charge-policies-for-immigrants-implications-for-health-coverage/>

⁶ <https://www.goodrx.com/blog/why-are-prescription-drugs-more-expensive-in-the-us-than-in-other-countries/>

⁷ <http://healthcareforall.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Prescription-Drug-Affordability-Poll-Memo-111517.pdf>

⁸ *Open Secrets*. Lobbying Spending Database PHarmaceuticals/Health Products, 2017

⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wnk/wp/2015/02/11/big-pharmaceutical-companies-are-spending-far-more-on-marketing-than-research/>

¹⁰ <https://khn.org/patient-advocacy/#>