



Consumers for Affordable Health Care

on a mission to ensure all Mainers have access to
high-quality, affordable, comprehensive health care

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To the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services,

Testimony in Support of:

LD 697, An Act to Direct the Maine Prescription Drug Affordability Board to Assess Strategies to Reduce Prescription Drug Costs and to Take Steps to Implement Reference-Based Pricing

March 13, 2025

Senator Bailey, Assistant Majority Leader Gramlich, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. My name is Kate Ende, Policy Director at Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC). I am here to testify in support of LD 697, An Act to Direct the Maine Prescription Drug Affordability Board to Assess Strategies to Reduce Prescription Drug Costs and to Take Steps to Implement Reference-based Pricing. CAHC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates the right to quality, affordable healthcare for every person in Maine.

As designated by Maine's Attorney General, CAHC serves as Maine's Health Insurance Consumer Assistance Program. We also serve as the state's Ombudsman program for Maine's Medicaid program, MaineCare, and help people apply for and navigate the enrollment process for MaineCare. Our toll-free HelpLine fielded nearly 7,300 calls and emails last year from people across Maine needing help with insurance coverage or with accessing or affording health care services.

Many of the people who reach out to our helpline report having a difficult time affording or accessing the medications they need to maintain their health. For example, a woman from Knox County who relies on Eliquis to prevent blood clots expressed her growing concern as the medication's rising price has made it increasingly difficult for her to keep up. Another individual, from York County, reported having been prescribed medication to treat her diabetes but not being able to buy it because she couldn't afford the high costs of the drug.

Polling conducted recently, which CAHC will release soon, found that more than half of Mainers are concerned about being able to afford prescription drugs. Furthermore, one in three Mainers report they have not taken medication as prescribed, due to high drug costs, including cutting pills in half, skipping doses of medication, postponing refilling prescriptions, and skipping filling prescriptions altogether. Survey results also reveal that nearly 9 out of ten Mainers support implementing policy to address rising prescription drug costs.

This bill would change the scope of Maine's Prescription Drug Affordability Board (PDAB) to direct the Board to review data to identify high and rising spending, to solicit public input regarding cost

related barriers to accessing prescription drugs, and to assess strategies to reduce high and rising costs and cost-related barriers to accessing prescription drugs.

One strategy to be assessed, based on the experience of other states, is the feasibility of implementing upper payment limits (UPLs) on certain prescription drugs. Several states, including Maryland and Colorado have similar drug affordability boards that have taken steps towards establishing UPLs on a limited number of high-cost medications.

Another strategy to be assessed by the PDAB includes the review and consideration of savings to the state employee health plan if referenced-based pricing were used for the first 10 drugs subject to prices negotiated under Medicare.¹ It is worth noting that 7 of the 10 drugs identified for price negotiation under Medicare are also among the top 25 most costly drugs in Maine, according to data released by the Maine Health Data Organization.²

Other strategies to be considered by Maine's PDAB include strengthening transparency requirements and capping out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs under health plans. This bill gives Maine's PDAB an opportunity to learn from the experiences of other states and to evaluate several approaches that could be used to lower costs for individuals and public health programs and increase access to prescription drugs here in Maine.

Thank you for the hard work this committee has put into ensuring the good health of Mainers. I urge you to address the ongoing issue of high drug prices by supporting the passage of LD 697.

¹ <https://www.cms.gov/inflation-reduction-act-and-medicare/medicare-drug-price-negotiation>

² <https://mhdo.maine.gov/tableau/prescriptionReports.cshtml>