

**Testimony of Catherine Begin  
Resident of Waterville, Maine**

**In Support of LD 673,  
An Act To Create the Insulin Safety Net**

**Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services**

**April 13, 2021**

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and members of the Committee, my name is Catherine Begin, and I live in Waterville.

When my middle son was 24, he lost a lot of weight. He was 6'1" feet tall and he lost 35 pounds really fast, and he was suddenly having a really hard time seeing. At one point, he was having such a hard time seeing, he was sitting right in front of the TV to watch it. He got really sick and was thirsty and tired all the time, and it hit me that he might have diabetes. So, I told him he had to get checked out. When they tested his blood sugar, it was over 1200. He then was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. As a point of reference, the average person's blood sugar is between 70 to 100. He was in the critical care unit for at least five days before they transferred him to a regular room. The doctors told me that if I hadn't gotten him to the hospital, he would have died within hours.

Nick worked at Oakland House of Pizza, and always struggled to afford his insulin and supplies. Because of this, he had a hard time managing his diabetes. He would often reuse syringes and lancets until they hurt, because he couldn't afford new ones. Test strips for his meter were so expensive, so he didn't test his blood sugar regularly. His insulin was the most expensive, over \$400 at the time, and that didn't include all the supplies he needed. He often couldn't afford it, and he relied on the kindness of doctors who tried to help provide insulin for him. But because the costs were so expensive, his care and management suffered greatly. He rationed his insulin all the time. Sometimes he gave too little, and sometimes too much. And he landed in the hospital on many occasions because of this. One time, one of his coworkers found him lying on the ground unconscious and he had to be rushed to the hospital and treated until his blood sugar levels were stable again.

In 2017, when Nick was 36, I noticed one day he was really cranky – a symptom of high blood sugar – and he was sitting really close to the television. In my gut, I sensed his blood sugar was probably high and I asked him if I could take him to the ER, but he said, "I'm fine, Mom." I wish I had. Two days later, my youngest son, Chris, found Nick lifeless on the floor. He had rationed his insulin again and he had died.

For the last four years, I've felt really guilty. I wished I had just taken him, but I couldn't make him get in the car. I wish I could have saved him. But then I realized, it wasn't my fault. And it wasn't Nick's fault. It wasn't his fault that he couldn't afford his insulin. It costs about \$5 to make a vial of insulin, but they sell it for more money than the average person can afford. If they can sell it for \$38 dollars in Canada, why don't they do that here?

When I heard about LD 673, I burst into tears and said, "This bill would have saved Nick's life." This bill will provide a one-month supply of insulin to people like my son, who can't afford it. It won't bring Nick back, but I pray you'll vote to pass it, so it can prevent others from losing their lives.