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**Testimony by State Senator Chip Curry  
In Support of LD 120, LD 1117, LD 686, LD 675 and LD 673  
Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on  
Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services  
Tuesday, April 13, 2021**

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and Distinguished Colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services:

My name is Chip Curry. I am the State Senator for Senate District #11, which includes all of the rural, coastal and island communities of Waldo County. I am pleased to support LDs 120, 1117, 686, 675 and 673 – also known as the Making Health Care Work for Maine Package.

For some, the pharmaceutical industry – along with its system of research, patents, marketing and pricing – is distant and abstract. For many, like myself and my father, the issues presented before us here today are a daily experience.

I am so appreciative of the small tackle box of drugs that help to keep my father's chronic conditions at bay. These drugs keep him alive and allow him to maintain a decent quality of life and independence. At the same time, I am very aware that the pharmaceutical industry has few limits on what they can charge a population dependent on their products. These pharmaceutical companies don't need any reason to jack up prescription drug prices. In fact, we've seen pharmaceutical companies increase prices just because they can make a profit off the health of American families and seniors.<sup>1</sup>

It's been over 65 years since Jonas Salk, inventor of the polio vaccine, was questioned why he didn't choose to patent the vaccine.<sup>2</sup> He famously declared that the people owned the patent given their tremendous charitable donations that funded the vaccines research and testing. Today is a different world; a world where price is simply determine by what pharmaceuticals companies can get people to pay. When there are few reasonable medical alternatives and life-saving drugs are held hostage by single companies, free market forces fail us. It is in these time that we look to government for protection.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emilywillingham/2016/08/21/why-did-mylan-hike-epipen-prices-400-because-they-could/?sh=5c87d4280c7c>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.history.com/news/8-things-you-may-not-know-about-jonas-salk-and-the-polio-vaccine>

Every day I hear from people in Waldo County who are making terrible, tough decisions to either pay the bills or afford their prescription drugs. In fact, the cost of medication is 256 percent higher in the U.S. than in at least 23 other countries.<sup>3</sup> All across Maine working families are struggling to get by. Enough is enough. We know that the system isn't working and it's time to fix it.

That's why I'm proud to support and co-sponsor the bills in the Making Health Care Work for Maine package. These bills will allow us to take power away from Big Pharma and provide protections and support for Mainers.

There are several bills in the Making Health Care Work for Maine package that focus on prescription drug pricing in different ways. One is LD 1117, "An Act To Prevent Excessive Prices for Prescription Drugs," which would protect Mainers from price gouging and prevent pharmaceutical companies from raising prices just because they can. LD 675, "An Act To Protect Maine Consumers from Unsupported Price Increases on Prescription Medicines by Creating an Independent Review Process," would then give us the tools we needed to hold pharmaceutical companies to account if they were found to increase drug prices for no reason.

For far too long, pharmaceutical companies have also purposefully left consumers in the dark when it comes to how and why certain drugs cost as much as they do. 686, "An Act To Increase Prescription Drug Pricing Transparency," which would allow lawmakers to better understand prescription drug pricing and pass targeted legislation to close loopholes and rein in costs.

These bills are important to me, my family and my constituents all across Waldo County. We need to continue our fight to rein in extreme prescription drug price increases and demand more drug pricing transparency.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of these bills. I am happy to answer any questions.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2956.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2956.html)