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April 8, 2021

Testimony in favor of LD 120 An Act To Lower Health Care Costs through the Establishment of the Office of Affordable Health Care

Good Morning Chairs Sanborn, Tepler and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services.

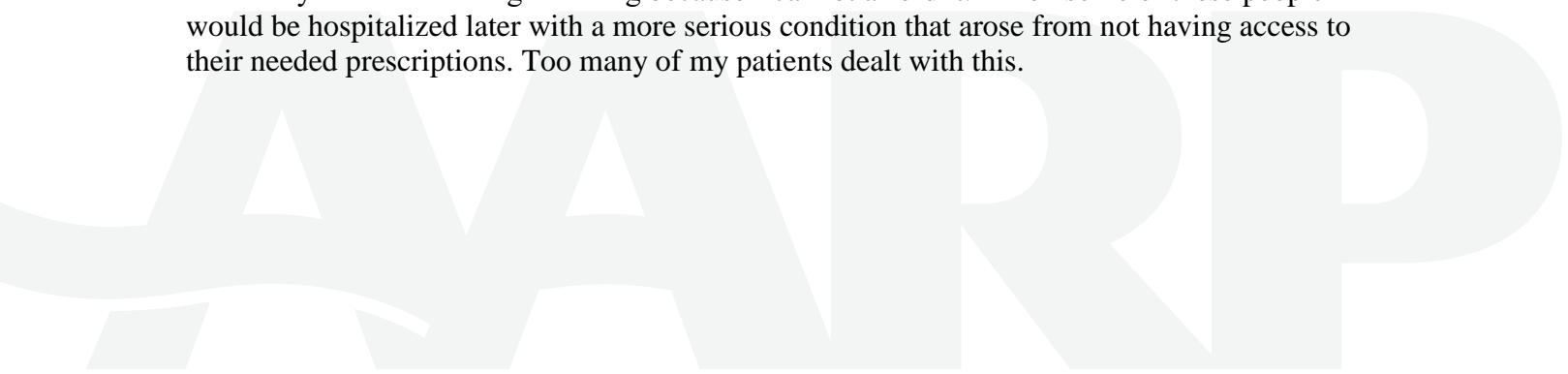
My name is Betsy Martin and I am from Biddeford. I am a volunteer for AARP Maine and today I am testifying in support of LD 120.

Mainers face many barriers to affordable care, especially to affordable prescription drugs. It isn't right that Americans have to pay the highest prices in the world for medicines they need. I unfortunately know this experience firsthand for the prescriptions I need as a consumer and as a healthcare provider.

When I was still working I developed atrial fibrillation, cause unknown. At the time I had insurance through work which covered the costs of my prescriptions. When I retired my health insurance changed and the cost of most of the medications I was prescribed was \$10 to \$20. However, I was also taking Eliquis, a drug that can lower the chance of a stroke in people with atrial fibrillation. I have been taking this medication since 2017. I found out that I would now need to pay up to \$500 for a three month supply of Eliquis! In search of a more affordable option, I called my supplemental insurance provider, the manufacturer, advocate groups; anyone who I thought may be able to help find an affordable option, but I couldn't find any relief.

I am still taking this medication and have brought up the cost concern with my cardiologist, who still feels this medication is the best option for me. I am very lucky I can afford this medication but I need to anticipate that cost, and plan my spending around that expense as anyone would be forced to do. I only became aware of the high cost of this drug when my insurance changed, but the truth is manufacturers are setting prices extremely high. Those who have insurance that can cover these prescriptions are lucky but the initial price is too steep, and we all end up paying for it some way, through rising premiums or higher deductibles.

Before I retired as a community health nurse. I was also very familiar with the experience of patients not being able to afford the medications they needed. I would work with patients who would say "I am not taking that drug because I cannot afford it." Then some of these people would be hospitalized later with a more serious condition that arose from not having access to their needed prescriptions. Too many of my patients dealt with this.



It will take many reforms to address the unaffordable cost of prescription drugs. I am asking you to support LD 120 to help Maine take a step in the right direction to reign in these outrageous costs. Too many people are making tough decisions between paying for food or utilities and other necessities or for their prescriptions.

I respectfully ask for your support on LD 120.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Martin
Biddeford