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Testimony of Sen. Chloe Maxmin supporting
Making Health Care Work for Maine, including
LD 120, An Act To Lower Health Care Costs through the Establishment of the Office of
Affordable Health Care
LD 673, An Act To Create the Insulin Safety Net Program
LD 675, An Act To Protect Maine Consumers from Unsupported Price Increases on
Prescription Medicines by Creating an Independent Review Process
LD 686, An Act To Increase Prescription Drug Pricing Transparency
LD 1117, An Act To Prevent Excessive Prices for Prescription Drugs
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and honorable members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee:

My name is Chloe Maxmin. I represent Senate District 13, which includes all of Lincoln County except for Dresden, plus Washington and Windsor—a total of twenty-seven towns. I am here today to speak in support of LDs 120, 673, 675, 686 and LD 1117, “An Act to Prevent Excessive Prices for Prescription Drugs.”

I am proud to be a cosponsor of all five bills you’re hearing today that aim to make health care more accessible and fair for Mainers. We all know that America’s health care system is broken. We see it in the news, we hear it from our constituents and many of us have experienced it ourselves. So many of the solutions to the big problems we’re facing require more than we can do at the state level. But the Maine Legislature has made great progress these past few years. The pandemic and the economic fallout that accompanied it have reminded us that now is not the time to stop fighting.

Over the past year, we have seen our communities come together in remarkable ways to support our most vulnerable. Neighbors picked up groceries or went to the pharmacy for those who couldn’t go themselves. Teachers went above and beyond to make sure kids felt supported, stayed well fed, and were able to continue with their education. In many ways we’ve witnessed the best of what humanity has to offer during this time of great need.

But unfortunately, when there is great need, there will be those who see that need as an opportunity to profit. The early days of the pandemic saw desperate people searching desperately for hand sanitizer, personal protective equipment, and even – famously – toilet paper, only to be confronted by outrageous prices that were many times what we normally pay. Most of us saw this for what it was – price gouging. To confront this, Governor Mills proclaimed that a person

could not sell certain necessities at an unconscionable price, and that the Attorney General could prosecute them if they did.¹

It's time we seriously apply this thinking to the necessity of prescription drugs. If we've been lucky enough to avoid chronic illness, to not rely on a prescription to stay alive, there is a good chance we will as we get older. If things go on as they have been, sooner or later you or someone you love will need a prescription that is just too expensive. This has been the reality for too many Mainers already. Too many of our friends and neighbors have had to choose between taking their medicine as prescribed and putting food on the table, paying rent or heating their home.

Health care in America has been so expensive, and the pricing process so obscure, for so long that we've almost become accustomed to it. We have a habit of taking pharmaceutical companies at their word when they say that price increases are necessary to fund research and development, even when the drug in question has been around for decades. We know that, for the most part, it is not true that these price increases are driven by R&D spending.² When this profiteering comes at the expense of people's health, it can't be allowed to go on any longer.

LD 1117 puts in place some common sense safeguards so that we can catch price gouging when it happens to protect consumers. This bill is a necessary piece of the puzzle, and alongside the other bills the committee will consider today, it will help make a real difference in the health and safety of Mainers.

Thank you for considering this bill and LDs 120, 673, 675 and 686 today. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Chloe Maxmin

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/sites/maine.gov/governor.mills/files/inline-files/Proclamation%20Declaring%20Abnormal%20Market%20Disruption%20Emergency%20-%20March%202017th.pdf>

² <https://porter.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=276>