

This testimony is in support of:

LD 120, An Act To Lower Health Care Costs through the Establishment of the Office of Affordable Health Care

LD 1117, An Act To Prevent Excessive Prices for Prescription Drugs

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 673, An Act To Create the Insulin Safety Net Program

My name is Patricia Taniashvili and I live in Surry, Maine. I'm speaking today on behalf of and in support of my husband, Losif, who is Georgian and whose second language is Russian.

Losif recently retired from his job and has type 2 diabetes. He currently has a health insurance plan through the ACA Marketplace with a deductible of \$5,700. I'm a retired teacher, so I can't put him on my insurance and he is not yet eligible for Medicare.

Trulicity is the type 2 diabetes drug that works the best for Losif. He has gone without this drug for the last two years because it is so expensive. The drug was approved by the FDA in 2014, yet there is no generic available. Losif has tried other diabetes drugs, but they either are unaffordable or they don't work as well. Trulicity costs \$600/month with his insurance. Losif's only income is a once/month Social Security check in the amount of \$1,008.

According to Losif's doctor, his diabetes is uncontrolled without Trulicity and I'm very concerned about his health. This is not Losif's fault. He watches his diet and does everything he can to control his diabetes. We are doing everything we can, yet we are still faced with only one option, which is to charge the cost of Trulicity to my credit card and end up with a huge debt. When you're stuck in this kind of catch 22, the only choice is to personally incur a huge debt. This is unconscionable, charging so much for an essential medication. Losif's blood sugar is over 200 on a daily basis and he sleeps all of the time because his diabetes isn't being properly treated because of the cost of this drug.

It's immoral when you have a life-changing drug and then jack up the price to make more money. We already have a second mortgage on our home and can't afford a third mortgage to pay for Trulicity. We feel like we are being squeezed. If you as legislators have the capacity to control these drug prices in some way, which it appears you would with this package of bills, it is your duty. We are not the only ones suffering. There are children and adults with type 1 diabetes in the same dire situation and this is patently unfair to them and us. We are human beings, not bank accounts.

Iosif retired from trucking at the end of January, and instead of doing things he loves like fishing, he has no energy to get out of bed. He is generally an on-the-go person, but can't be that way because he can't get the medication he needs, Trulicity. Thank God I'm at home to help him 24/7. This has been very difficult and obviously it's not something either one of us wants to be dealing with in retirement. Iosif is from the former Soviet Union and I always believed our country had the best of everything. Yet here we are in this situation in a country that has the best medications, doctors and hospitals, and yet we can't access these benefits. It's like dangling food in front of a starving man. Frankly, it's not what I was brought up to understand what this country is all about.

In closing, I reiterate my request that you please support these prescription drug bills and help Mainers like us get the prescriptions drugs we need.

Thank you.

Pat and Iosif Taniashvili
Surry, Maine