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THE MAINE SENATE
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Testimony in Support of LD 1636
An Act To Reduce Prescription Drug Costs by Using International Reference Pricing
Presented to the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
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Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Troy Jackson. I have the great honor of representing northern Aroostook County and serving as President of the Maine Senate. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1636, "An Act To Reduce Prescription Drug Costs by Using International Reference Pricing."

I'm sure that each of us has heard more heart wrenching stories than we can count about the impact high drug costs have had on our friends, neighbors, and constituents. Last session I shared a story with you about my constituent who feared she would die of breast cancer because she could not afford the medications. Paying for those medications required her to refinance her home, refinance her car and use five different credit cards just to stay afloat while she fought for her life.

Mainers shouldn't have to jump through hoops to get the health care or prescription medication they need to go to work, play with their kids and live their lives. But the way our health care system is set up from the prescription drug manufacturers to pharmacy benefit managers and corporate health insurance giants, we have a system that is way more complicated than it needs to be. All these corporate players are fighting tooth and nail to make the most outrageous profit on the backs of patients simply trying to get the medication and care that best meets their health needs. It's why many of our colleagues, including members of this committee and myself, have introduced legislation to rein in prescription drug prices and improve health insurance coverage year after year.

In Maine, three out of four individuals are concerned about the high price of prescription medication, and as many as one in three adults skipped a dose of medicine, cut pills in half or didn't fill a prescription due to cost in the last year. And this is not unique to Maine. One in four

Americans find it difficult to pay for their prescription medication¹ and 77 percent believe that drug costs are unreasonable.² Drug prices are drowning folks, and yet pharmaceutical companies continue to raise prices.

LD 1636, “An Act To Reduce Prescription Drug Costs by Using International Reference Pricing” could be an important step towards halting uncontrolled drug costs that make it harder for our constituents, our families and neighbors to make ends meet every day. It’s an innovative approach to solving a problem that is unique to Americans, unlike our neighbors to the north. Prescription drug prices here are 218 percent greater than prices in Canada.

Earlier this week, the Maine Health Data Organization reported that Mainers spent \$170 million more on the 25 drugs that experienced the highest price increase last year than in the previous year.³ With Mainers paying astronomical prices while Canadians paying just a fraction of the prices for the same medication, it’s clear we need to act.

Now I know that one bill or package of legislation put forward by state lawmakers won’t bring reform to an out-of-control industry, worth hundreds of billions of dollars, that profits off the poor health of Mainers. But with every new law to improve health insurance coverage and lower prescription drug prices, we can begin to make a difference for hardworking Mainers who are desperate for relief.

I want to thank all of you for your time and attention this morning, and thank you for your work to lower health care costs for Maine people.

¹ <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/poll-finding/kaiser-health-tracking-poll-august-2015/>

² <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/drug-price-gouging-laws-becoming-new-trend#Drug-prices-rising>

³ <https://mhdo.maine.gov/tableau/prescriptionReports.cshhtml>