

Testimony of Kari Keaton
608 Autumn Wind Way, Rockville MD 20850
Health and Government Operations Committee
February 20, 2024
Position: FAVORABLE HB 939

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

I am submitting this testimony today on behalf of my two adult sons, each with multiple life threatening food allergies, and on behalf of the Metro DC Food Allergy Support Group. I am the facilitator of this support group of several hundred Maryland and DC area food allergy families.

Epinephrine auto injectors are a very unique kind of medication because it is one you hope you never have to use, however, you always need to have at least two devices with each food allergic person at all times.

Families with young children need to have two devices located at each location that cares for their child--home, day care, school, grandparents, and often at friends houses. Once a child can carry their own auto injectors, they need two with them at all times, but there are also situations where they might need to have more injectors with them such as travel while they are in flight or traveling to locations without nearby health care. The multiple injectors are needed in the case of severe enough reactions that more than two injections of epinephrine are needed to control the reaction.

Over the past 30 years that I have been involved with food allergies, the cost of epinephrine auto injectors has gone up significantly.

One example from a support group member who considers his family to have good health insurance coverage pays \$262.50 out-of-pocket for a 2-pack of EpiPens for their child. Since he needs a 2-pack at school, a 2-pack to go on the bus, and a 2-pack for the parents to have their annual out-of-pocket expense is \$787.50. Even with this good insurance coverage, this is a significant expense for this family.

Another example is a family that wanted to get an Auvi Q auto injector and their insurance wouldn't cover it at all--quoting an out-of-pocket cost of \$5000.

Families with high deductible insurance plans are really at risk of having to pay high out-of-pocket costs for auto injectors if they haven't met their deductible at the time they need to purchase auto injectors. They will be quoted prices of \$400 to \$1000 for a 2-pack.

EpiPens rarely have expiration dates of more than 12 months, so to keep them current, the replacement does become an annual event. School nurses won't even accept EpiPens that have expiration dates within the school year, so even if the device is still current, the family has to get another 2-pack with an expiration date that will last the school year.

This life saving medication should be readily available to all families dealing with life threatening allergic reactions at the reasonable out-of-pocket cost of not more than \$60 per 2-pack.