



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 357

**Prescription Drug Affordability Board - Authority for Upper
Payment Limits
(Lowering Prescription Drug Costs for All Marylanders Now Act)**

Finance Committee

FAVORABLE

TO: Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair; Senator Antonio Hayes, Vice-Chair; and the Members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

DATE: February 7, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 357, which would grant Maryland's Prescription Drug Affordability Board the expanded authority to set statewide upper payment limits to make high-cost drugs more affordable for *all* Marylanders. We have been pleased to see the progress the Board has made over the last year, particularly the approval of its Upper Payment Limit Action Plan to make prescription drugs more affordable for state and local governments. However, the fact remains that we must do more to directly help Marylanders struggling to afford their medications. This legislation would provide meaningful relief to our families and neighbors at a time when so many Marylanders are forced to choose between filling their prescriptions and filling their fridges. We thank Vice-Chair Bonnie Cullison and Delegate Jennifer White Holland for sponsoring this legislation.

The Episcopal Church teaches that access to quality and affordable health care is a basic human right and the Church supports those efforts to provide universal and equitable access for all. Our General Convention urges all Episcopalians to advocate for just and adequate health care policies and views this as a vital mission of the Church. And we are proud to be working side by side in this effort with the Delaware-Maryland Synod, the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church, The Baltimore Jewish Council and our many other faith partners.

Polling shows as many as 45% of Marylanders report struggling to afford the medicines they need, with one third of Marylanders skipping a dose, rationing medication, or leaving a prescription unfilled due to cost. At the same time, skyrocketing drug costs are contributing to all of our health insurance premiums, making quality coverage less affordable for our residents. Meanwhile, prescription drug corporations use far more resources on self-enrichment and advertising than they do on research and development, regularly prioritizing profits over patients.

Marylanders should not have to choose between their prescription drugs and other necessities. With federal action on this issue uncertain under the new administration, it is critical that Maryland, under the guidance of this committee, continues to lead the nation on prescription drug affordability efforts.

The Diocese of Maryland thanks you for your consideration of this issue and **we strongly urge a favorable report of Senate Bill 357.**



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