



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: February 6, 2024

RE: HB424 – Prescription Drug Affordability Board – Authority for Upper Payment Limits (Lowering Prescription Drug Costs for All Marylanders Now Act)

### **The MLLC supports HB424 – Prescription Drug Affordability Board – Authority for Upper Payment Limits (Lowering Prescription Drug Costs for All Marylanders Now Act)**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB424.

The skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs impacts all Marylanders— whether at the pharmacy counter, through our insurance premiums, or our taxpayer dollars, we all feel the burden of expensive medications. Unfortunately, this burden is especially heavy on the Latino community, largely due to glaring racial health inequities that continue to persist in our country despite advancements in medical care and the gains made by the Affordable Care Act.

Social, political, and economic conditions result in Latinos being more likely to suffer from chronic conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes, both of which require expensive prescription medications.<sup>1</sup> Black and Latino adults older than 65 are between 1.5 and 2 times more likely to report difficulty affording their medications than their White counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Additional social factors like higher risk occupations, higher levels of poverty, and barriers to navigating the health care system exacerbate these issues. Finally, the Latino population has the highest uninsured rates in the state/country, which can make health care and prescription drugs out of reach.<sup>3</sup>

The following bill requires the Prescription Drug Affordability Board to establish a process for setting upper payment limits for all purchases and payer reimbursements of prescription drug products in that the Board has determined will have led or will lead to affordability challenges. Specifically, the bill alters requirements that should be considered when setting an upper payment limit on a prescription drug and authorizes the Board to reconsider an upper payment limit for a drug that becomes a current shortage.

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<sup>1</sup> [Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Prescription Coverage and Medication Use](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Prescription Drug Affordability among Medicare Beneficiaries](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Hispanic/Latino Health](#)

As long as prescription drug manufacturers are allowed to charge whatever they deem the market can bear, those with the fewest economic resources in our country will shoulder the heaviest burden.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB424.