



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 537 - Pharmacists - Required Notification and Authorized Substitution - Lower-Cost Drug or Device Product

SPONSOR: Senator Hershey

HEARING DATE: February 16, 2021

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 537 - Pharmacists - Required Notification and Authorized Substitution - Lower-Cost Drug or Device Product**, which allows pharmacists to substitute a therapeutically equivalent brand-name prescription drug to the originally prescribed generic drug if the prescription is not specified to be dispensed only as directed, the substitution is recognized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the consumer will be charged less.

The cost of prescription medication is a well-known barrier to patients' full compliance with the prescribed course of treatment. Lower-cost and therapeutically equivalent treatments should be presented when available so patients can make an informed decision in their own best interest.

Prescription drug spending increased 5.7% to \$369.7 billion in 2019, faster than the 3.8% growth in 2018, according to the National Health Expenditure Data Fact Sheet.¹ Maryland residents should not need to choose between needed medication or other critical expenses, like food or utilities. These choices have both short and long-term health consequences. This bill is an important step towards limiting prescription expenses for Marylanders, enabling them to achieve better health and financial outcomes.

¹ National Health Expenditure Data Fact Sheet, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Dec. 16, 2020; Accessed on Jan. 31, 2021, at <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/NHE-Fact-Sheet>

Assuring access to high-quality, affordable health care, and reducing the burden of disease in Prince George's County have been core goals of the Prince George's Health Department during my administration. By reducing cost-related barriers to successful pharmaceutical treatment, **SB 537** will improve medication compliance, leading to better control of disease and improved health outcomes.

For these reasons, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 537** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.