



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

2600 ST. PAUL STREET BALTIMORE, MD 21218

P: (410)235-9000

F: (410)235-8963

WWW.HEALTHCAREFORALL.COM

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1397

Insulin Cost Reduction Act

Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee

By Catherine Kirk Robins, Deputy Director, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative

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Madam Chair and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **House Bill 1397, the Insulin Cost Reduction Act**. HB 1397 would establish a cap on copayments and coinsurance to limit what covered patients are required to pay to no more than \$30 for insulin drug prescriptions for a 30-day supply. While similar legislation by Delegate Reznik (2020's HB 134) resulted in voluntary action to reduce insulin cost-sharing by CareFirst, many Marylanders continue to face a health crisis due to insulin costs. We thank Vice Chair Joseline Peña-Melnik for continuing to address the skyrocketing costs of insulin by sponsoring this critical legislation, which would further establish important patient protections for covered Marylanders.

Insulin, despite having originated in the 1920s, has become increasingly expensive due to accumulating yearly price hikes from manufacturers. The cost of insulin doubled between 2012 and 2016 alone¹, placing a growing burden on individuals living with diabetes and resulting in an increase of insulin rationing². This self-rationing may result in deadly or life-altering complications such as blindness, kidney failure, or loss of limbs. Additionally, the burdensome costs are an unnecessary stressor on Maryland families, forcing some patients to choose between their life-saving medication and other necessities, like rent or groceries. Maryland can and must act to help remedy this issue, and HB 1397 would implement important patient protections.

HB 1397 is an important step towards ensuring that all Maryland patients can afford the insulin that they need. Thanks to the leadership of this Committee, the Maryland General Assembly established a first-in-the-nation Prescription Drug Affordability Board in 2019—in addition to this legislation, we encourage this issue to be further examined by the Prescription Drug Affordability Board so that all Marylanders who rely on insulin, including the uninsured, can afford this life-saving medication. Insulin pricing is a complex issue, and a comprehensive solution requires thorough review of several factors, including unintended consequences that may result. MCHI urges the additional consideration of actions by the Board—that include a focus on the entirety of the supply chain—to build on HB 1397 and the previous strides made in 2020.

MCHI remains committed to ensuring all Marylanders are able to afford their medication, because drugs don't work if people can't afford them. We urge a favorable report of this legislation and thank the Committee for its ongoing commitment to ensuring all Marylanders have access to quality, affordable health care.

¹ https://healthcostinstitute.org/images/easyblog_articles/267/HCCI-Insulin-Use-and-Spending-Trends-Brief-01.22.19.pdf

² <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/09/01/641615877/insulins-high-cost-leads-to-lethal-rationing>