



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT**: SB 357: Prescription Drug Affordability Board - Authority for Upper Payment Limits (Lowering Prescription Drug Costs for All Marylanders Now Act)

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee,

I commend Senator Gile for sponsoring Senate Bill 357 which would lower prescription drug costs for all Marylanders. Now, more than ever with rising prescription drug prices, we must work together to guarantee that all Marylanders can affordably access their needed prescriptions.

The Prescription Drug Affordability Board was established in 2019 and was the first in the nation to control soaring drug costs to make prescriptions more affordable for all Marylanders. Currently, the Board only has authority to negotiate prices for county and state government employees. However, recent poll results tell us that 45% of our residents are struggling to pay for their prescription drugs. The Prescription Drug Affordability Board needs broader authority to help lower prescription drug costs for *all* Maryland residents.

In Howard County, the health and wellbeing of our residents is a shared priority and commitment. In 2021, we were only one of four counties in the nation awarded with the prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 'Culture of Health Prize.' In addition, we have been ranked among the Top 10 Healthiest Counties in the nation according to rankings by U.S. News & World Report. In recent Open Enrollment seasons, we have worked hard to help ensure a notable 14 percent increase in the number of Howard County residents who enrolled in health insurance. This significant uptick serves as a clear indicator that our residents prioritize their well-being. Prescription drug costs should not stand as a barrier to accessing the care they need to stay healthy.

Marylanders should not be forced to choose between paying for their medication or paying for other necessities like feeding their families or paying for housing. We are a model and a leader in the nation on showcasing our commitment to the health of Marylanders. While we have made great strides in building a strong and healthy community, we must do better because prescription drugs don't work if residents can't afford them. I welcome your support and urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 357.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive

