

March 15, 2023

Senate Health and Human Services Committee
Chair Melissa Wiklund

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee,

As a cardiologist and lifelong Minnesota resident, I urge you to support the passage of SF168 to establish a Prescription Drug Affordability Board and prohibit price-gouging of generic prescription drugs. I'm confident that this legislation will lower prescription drug costs and improve health outcomes for my patients and Minnesotans across the state, of all ages and backgrounds.

I provide care to patients with failing hearts — some of whom need mechanical pumps or transplants. I see people on a daily basis whose health is profoundly and directly impacted by their access to necessary prescription medications. But drugs only work when patients are able to take them as prescribed; too many Minnesotans are unable to do that due to skyrocketing costs. It is all too common for patients to decline life saving therapies due to cost burden. It's well-documented that many people ration their pills, or skip them entirely, and I have seen this often. When someone is not on a recommended medication due to cost, I have taken to documenting the reason for non-adherence as "financial toxicity."

Meanwhile, pharmaceutical corporations continue to bring in record profits while simultaneously lobbying to block legislation that makes drug costs affordable.

It doesn't have to be this way. My patients and fellow Minnesotans deserve a better deal and I believe that this bill has a chance to shift the balance between financial profitability and toxicity to the benefit of patients and away from record pharmaceutical profits.

Our state has a track record of progress on prescription drug issues. Lawmakers have passed the Drug Price Transparency Act, reforms around pharmaceutical benefits managers, and the Alec Smith Emergency Insulin Act. Now it is time to address drug cost affordability.

Six other states have passed Prescription Drug Affordability Boards and are beginning to set upper payment limits on certain expensive drugs. Benefiting from their experiences, we too can help keep drug costs affordable and prevent greedy price-gouging by Big Pharma.

By doing so, the Minnesota Legislature can help people *throughout the entire state* access the medications they've been prescribed, without having to skip groceries or rent payments. This will help reduce suffering, while saving on health care costs long term, as every dollar spent improving medication adherence [saves seven dollars](#) in total health care costs.

Passing this legislation will save money and save lives. I encourage the Health and Human Services Committee to pass it without delay.

Sincerely,

Peter Eckman, MD, FACC, FHFSA, FAHA
Cardiologist
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