

Ensure Access to Affordable and Essential Medications

Reforms Needed to Reduce Drug Costs, Improve Transparency, and Eliminate Harmful Protocols

Talking Points for Use in Calls with Members of Congress and Staff

- I urge you to support legislation that will help ensure that my patients will have access to the most clinically-appropriate treatments and medications.

Address Harmful Step Therapy Protocols

- Specifically I am asking for your help in addressing barriers to care created through “step therapy” protocols.
- “Step therapy” requires patients to first “try and fail” certain treatments (often lower cost) before being allowed access to other, potentially more appropriate treatments, which can harm patients, undercut the physician-patient decision-making process, and create burden.
- Patients and their clinicians have voiced concern regarding the potential adverse effects of step therapy, when it is not paired with protections for patients. Step therapy protocols transition medical decisions from a shared decision-making approach, between the clinician and the patient, towards more standardized policies that focus on the cost of care, often at the hands of insurance companies.
- When patients are required to cycle through and document a “step”—or in some cases, more than one step or medication—the process may result in substantial delays in treatment deemed appropriate by their healthcare clinician. This process may affect patients’ ability to immediately start treatment, or in some cases, their ability to continue a treatment that has been effective.
- Legislation has been introduced in the House and Senate that represents a good first step in addressing the issue of step therapy protocols. I am urging you to cosponsor and pass the Safe Step Act (H.R. 2279/S. 2546), legislation that would provide protections to help patients access clinically-appropriate medications or treatments at the right time, instead of being forced to first follow pre-determined and sometimes harmful therapy protocols established by insurance companies.

Help with Prescription Drug Costs

- Physicians and patients need your help lowering prescription drug prices by passing the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2019 (H.R. 275/S. 62). This much

needed legislation would help to reduce drug prices by allowing the federal government to negotiate lower prices on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries.

- The cost of prescription drugs continues to rise, which greatly impacts access to life-saving treatments for patients who are unable to afford high out-of-pocket costs.
- Studies show that millions of Americans face the difficult choice of filling their prescriptions or paying for necessities such as food or housing.
- Patients may resort to cutting back or skipping doses of their medicines to save money, which can lead to more serious health complications.

Address Prescription Drug Transparency

- Please help on the issue of transparency in prescription drug pricing by working to pass the Prescription Drug STAR Act (H.R. 2113), which would require manufacturers to justify and explain price spikes on their drugs as well as reveal the price and quantity of the drug free samples that they give to clinicians.
- For decades, pharmaceutical manufacturers have claimed that drug pricing is based on research and development cost and innovation and is well regulated by market forces.
- The spike in prices and increase in price for drugs already on the market have made many stakeholders wary, especially because many of these new therapies treat small populations and there are few data to support that overall health care costs are reduced.
- In 2018, a number of drug manufacturers announced they would not raise prices on drugs, noting the public concern about increasing drug prices. However, these decisions created a false sense of confidence that the issue was being addressed and in late 2018, most of these companies reneged on these announcements and raised the prices of their products.