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Massachusetts Chapter of the American College of Physicians  
Massachusetts Medical Society  
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children  
Massachusetts Senior Action Council  
MASSPIRG  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Massachusetts  
Right Care Alliance

## Massachusetts Families Need Relief Now: Key Strategies for the House to Lower Prescription Drug Costs

*Please include key provisions from H.729 in any House health care legislation*

**Background:** Individuals and families in Massachusetts continue to struggle with high and rising prescription drug costs, cutting into household budgets and negatively impacting health outcomes. High drug costs also contribute to increasing health insurance premiums, which are burdening residents and small businesses across the state. Without mechanisms to ensure that drugs are priced reasonably and fairly, residents will continue to face barriers to accessing and affording their medications.

### **Why is legislation urgently needed?**

- Prescription drug spending continues to rise, outpacing other health care spending in MA. According to the 2022 Center for Health Information and Analysis report, prescription drug spending grew 7.7% in 2020 – more than twice the overall state benchmark of 3.1% – even after taking into account rebates.
- High co-pays, coinsurance and deductibles for prescription drugs can force patients to skip or ration needed medications.
- To date, hospitals, insurers, businesses, providers, and consumers have all played a significant role in both ensuring health care coverage for Massachusetts residents and helping to bring down costs, while the pharmaceutical industry has not been part of the solution.

### **Why is this a health equity issue?**

- Communities of color and low-income communities are among the hardest hit by continually rising prescription drug prices.
- People of Color are disproportionately impacted by chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases. Individuals who cannot afford their medication and have uncontrolled chronic conditions are at higher risk for severe health complications.
- Improving access to affordable medications is one way to help curb racial inequities by ensuring people can get the prescriptions they need, particularly for those with chronic conditions.

### **What should legislation include?**

Any health care legislation taken up in the House should include the following key provisions from H.729, *An Act to ensure prescription drug cost transparency and affordability*, sponsored by Rep. Christine Barber and Rep. Jon Santiago:

- Lowering patients' out-of-pocket costs for medications, such as insulin and asthma inhalers, used to treat chronic conditions that disproportionately impact People of Color.
- Expanding the Health Policy Commission's authority to conduct affordability reviews of certain prescription drugs to the private market, which builds on the successful MassHealth drug pricing policy passed in the FY20 state budget and brings drug manufacturers in line with the cost review processes for other industry groups.
- Increasing oversight of pharmacy benefit managers through state licensure and enhancing drug price transparency to understand what is driving high and increasing prices.

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