



June 20, 2018

The Honorable Jeffrey Sanchez
Chair, Joint Committee on Ways & Means
Massachusetts House of Representatives
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Sanchez:

Collectively, we write in support of Pharmacy Co-Pay Assistance, Section 24 of HB4401.

SECTION 24. Section 226 of chapter 139 of the acts of 2012 is hereby amended by striking out the figure "2019", inserted by section 129 of chapter 133 of the acts of 2016, and inserting in place thereof the following figure: - 2021.

The section will extend the existing law's sunset provision on prescription drug discount programs through July 2021. This decision will help ensure that patients throughout Massachusetts can continue to reap significant cost-savings by taking advantage of co-pay programs for their prescription medications in the Commonwealth. We urge your support.

In 2012, Massachusetts became the last state in the country to enact legislation that gives patients the ability to utilize company sponsored prescription drug discounts at pharmacies for the co-pay and coinsurance costs of their prescription drugs. Prior to enacting this measure, prescription drug discount programs were worthless in Massachusetts because of an antiquated 1988 statute that banned any rebate for healthcare purchasing. Without legislative action in the current session to remove the sunset provision, the thousands of patients we collectively represent will face the potential elimination of the prescription drug discount programs, leading to uncertainty in the marketplace and increased out-of-pocket costs. We are imploring you not to eliminate these discounts.

Over the past six years, thousands of patients in Massachusetts have benefited and saved significantly in their out-of-pocket costs. The program is working. Patients in Massachusetts deserve the opportunity to continue using these money-saving programs. Allowing the law to sunset will take away a needed resource from patients and is contrary to the Commonwealth's stated goal of controlling health care costs.

Patients in Massachusetts are facing tough financial decisions. Many of those living with chronic illnesses are facing huge co-pays for the medications that help them manage their disease, which in some cases are life-threatening. Studies show that when the patient's share of prescription costs becomes too high, many patients skip doses or stop taking medication entirely, leading to higher medical costs down the road, in terms of hospitalizations, ER visits and long-term health issues.

With so much attention focused on drug prices, boosting health insurance enrollment numbers nationwide and making health care coverage more affordable, Massachusetts can take an important step by allowing these prescription discount drug programs permanently.

Please support the extension of the existing law's sunset provision on prescription drug discount programs through 2021. Help patients avoid the untenable predicament of making medical decisions based on their finances as opposed to their well-being. Data suggest that these discounts have had a positive effect on health care costs in every other state in which it has been law.

We thank you for your consideration and respectfully ask for your support.

Sincerely,

Carl Sciortino, Executive Director, AIDS Action Committee

Jan Hanson, M.A., Board President, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, NE Chapter

Joe Bellil, VP of Public Affairs, Easter Seals MA

Susan Linn, President and CEO, President, Epilepsy Foundation of New England

Danna Mauch, PhD, President & CEO, Massachusetts Association of Mental Health

Tim Boyd, MPH, Director of State Policy, National Organization for Rare Disorders

Richard Pezzillo, Executive Director, New England Hemophilia Association

Nicole Hemmenway, Interim CEO, U.S. Pain Foundation

Cc: The Honorable Robert DeLeo, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Ronald Mariano, Majority Leader of the House
The Honorable Bradley Jones, Jr., Minority Leader of the House