

November 23, 2020

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Denise C. Garlick, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Todd M. Smola, Ranking Minority Member
House Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Cindy F. Friedman, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Patrick M. O'Connor, Ranking Minority Member
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Budget Conferees,

We are writing, collectively, to express our support for the use of manufacturer copay assistance for prescription drugs in the Commonwealth. These vital programs allow thousands of Massachusetts patients to access the medications and treatments they need while helping with out-of-pocket costs. As you complete the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget, we respectfully request that the law allowing the use of manufacturer copay assistance in Massachusetts be extended to 2023.

In 2012, Massachusetts became the final state in the nation to enact legislation allowing patients to redeem prescription drug discount coupons at pharmacies to reduce co-pay costs. Before this legislation, these coupons were prohibited in the Commonwealth because of an outdated 1988 state law banning any rebate for health-care purchases. Unfortunately, patients are facing uncertainty surrounding this law, as it is scheduled to sunset in 2021 without legislative action.

Patients with chronic illnesses often face incredibly challenging financial decisions. Many must regularly choose between basic life necessities and the significantly high copays for the medications and treatments that allow them to manage their disease. These issues are more prominent than ever as Massachusetts patients continue to face significant financial hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies show that when patients' out-of-pocket costs rise, many skip doses or stop taking medications altogether. This lack of adherence results in higher costs related to hospitalizations, ER visits, and long-term health issues.

Thousands of patients in Massachusetts have benefitted from money-saving copay assistance over the past eight years. These programs provide significant relief to patients facing increased out-of-pocket costs for their medications due to higher co-pays from coverage changes like high deductible health care plans. Discounts and coupons reduce their out-of-pocket burden, improve access to prescription medicines and innovative therapies, and help patients to stay on the medications they need. These programs could be lifesaving for patients who are struggling during these difficult financial times.

As you work to finalize the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget, we implore you to keep the needs of our patients in mind and extend the sunset date on the law authorizing the use of manufacturer copay assistance to 2023. These programs help thousands of patients avoid making their medical decisions based primarily on financial concerns, rather than their well-being and physicians' recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

AdMeTech Foundation
Alliance for Balanced Pain Management
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, New England Chapter
Chronic Disease Coalition
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations
Derma Care Access Network
Easterseals Massachusetts
Epilepsy Foundation New England
Fenway Health
Global Healthy Living Foundation
Heart Brothers Foundation
Hemophilia Federation of America
IMPACT Melanoma
Lupus Foundation New England
Massachusetts Association for Mental Health
Massachusetts Society of Clinical Oncologists
Metro Boston Recovery Learning Community
National Alliance on Mental Illness of Massachusetts (NAMI Mass)
National Infusion Access Foundation (NICA) and Infusion Access Foundation (IAF)
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
New England Bleeding Disorders Advocacy Coalition
New England Hemophilia Association
Rare New England
Southeast Recovery Learning Community
The ALS Association, MA Chapter