



May 20, 2024

Comments on Select Drug(s) for Cost Review Study

Chair Mitchell, Members of the Prescription Drug Affordability Board, and Staff;

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. The League believes that healthcare is a human right, and that every resident should have access to affordable, equitable, quality health care, including essential medications. We appreciate the critical work of the Prescription Drug Affordability Board and are encouraged to see the steps being taken in the cost review process.

The cost of many prescription medications in the U.S. is extraordinarily high and is rising. Patients taking high-cost prescription drugs may be unable to afford them, even if they have insurance coverage that pays part of the cost. They may thus delay filling a prescription, cut pills in half, or skip doses altogether to stretch supply. Families may have to choose between paying the rent and paying the pharmacy. Healthcare providers see the dangerous consequences of their patients' inability to afford essential medications. Even when patients can afford the cost-sharing set by their insurance companies, the high cost of drugs puts pressure on everyone systematically through their premiums.

Meanwhile, Public Citizen reports that pharmaceutical manufacturers spend more on corporate-related expenses and marketing than on research. Some of the drugs with the highest advertisement spending are Dupixent, Skyrizi, Jardiance, and Ozempic.

In choosing medications for cost review, we urge the Board to consider health equity. Marylanders of color are disproportionately affected by many chronic conditions, as well as lack of access to coverage and medications. They will be most vulnerable to excessive out-of-pocket prescription costs.

While we are appreciative of the work being done so far to address costs for state and local governments, we are acutely aware that more needs to be done for Marylanders. We thank you for your dedication to addressing this issue and urge that you act swiftly so that Board authority expansion can be considered in the 2025 legislative session.

Submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nikki Tyree".

Nikki Tyree, Executive Director
LWVMD