

# Community Input on the Rising Costs of Prescription Drugs: Marylanders Tell Their Stories

Vincent DeMarco, President  
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative Education Fund

January 25, 2021



The impact  
of high-cost  
prescription  
drugs is  
clear:



**DRUGS DON'T WORK  
IF PEOPLE CAN'T  
AFFORD THEM.**

[www.healthcareforall.com](http://www.healthcareforall.com)

## THE TRUE COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS



### PATIENTS

One in four individuals report difficulty affording their prescription drugs.

45 million Americans did not fill a prescription in 2016 due to prohibitive costs.



### PREMIUMS

In Maryland, CareFirst reports that prescription drugs account for 33% of every premium dollar spent -- the single largest contributor to their overall spending.



### PUBLIC HEALTH

After price hikes of nearly 500% by some manufacturers, many health departments across the country struggle to afford naloxone.

# The problem continues to grow:

Despite a worsening pandemic that threatens the health and financial wellbeing of many, the pharmaceutical industry has continued to increase prices on existing drugs above the rate of inflation.

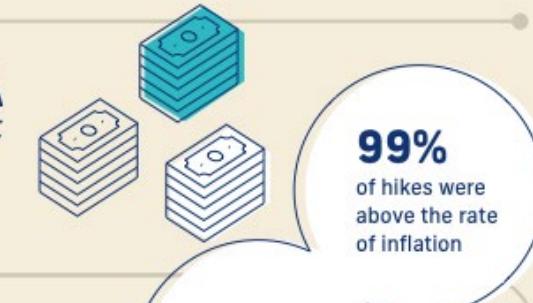
A recent Gallup poll found **9 out of 10** people worry that the pharmaceutical industry will use the COVID-19 pandemic to raise prices.

## A CLOSER LOOK:

### THE JANUARY 2021 DRUG PRICE INCREASES

#### BIG PHARMA HIKED THE PRICE OF **636 DRUGS**

in the first week of January



More than 100  
drug companies hiked  
prices on their products

4.99%  
median  
percent hike



#1  
the best-selling drug in the world, Humira,  
increased in price by 7.4%

#### Pfizer

the drug company with  
the most hikes



# Community Forums

The Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative Education Fund (MCHIEF) hosted seven listening sessions around the state to gather community input on the rising costs of prescription drugs. The forums were designed to educate the public about the Prescription Drug Affordability Board, collect input from the public, and gather stories of Marylanders who have struggled with high-cost prescription drugs.

MCHI created an online form to solicit community input to share with the Board, which can be found at [www.healthcareforall.com/RxInput](http://www.healthcareforall.com/RxInput)



**PLEASE JOIN US FOR A  
HOWARD COUNTY  
COMMUNITY SENIOR FORUM  
ON RISING DRUG PRICES**



With special guests  
Howard County Executive Calvin Ball  
Chair of Maryland Prescription Drug Affordability Board, Van Mitchell  
Maryland AARP Associate Director of State Advocacy, Tammy Bresnahan  
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative President, Vincent DeMarco

**JANUARY 6, 2020**  
**ELLIOTT CITY 50+ CENTER**  
12PM  
9401 FREDERICK ROAD,  
ELLIOTT CITY, MD  
21042

**Learn about Maryland's new Prescription Drug Affordability Board!**

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR A  
BALTIMORE COUNTY  
COMMUNITY SENIOR FORUM  
ON RISING DRUG PRICES**



With special guests  
Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski  
Maryland Prescription Drug Affordability Board Member, Ebere Onukwugha  
Maryland AARP Advocate, Jim Gutman  
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative President, Vincent DeMarco

**FEBRUARY 18, 2020**  
**OAK CREST SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY**  
6:30PM  
8820 WALTHER BLVD.  
PARKVILLE, MD 21234

**Learn about Maryland's new Prescription Drug Affordability Board!**



HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER  
STENY HOYER  
CHARLES COUNTY COMMISSIONER  
PRESIDENT  
REUBEN B.  
COLLINS, II, ESQ.  
PRESCRIPTION DRUG  
AFFORDABILITY  
BOARD MEMBER  
PROFESSOR EBERE  
ONUKWUGHA  
PRESCRIPTION DRUG  
AFFORDABILITY  
BOARD MEMBER  
PROFESSOR EBERE  
ONUKWUGHA  
MARYLAND AARP  
ADVOCATE  
JIM GUTMAN

**LEARN ABOUT MARYLAND'S NEW PRESCRIPTION DRUG AFFORDABILITY BOARD**

**9/23 @ 6 PM**  
**PREScription DRUG AFFORDABILITY TOWN HALL FORUM**

JOIN US FOR A FORUM DISCUSSION ON RISING DRUG PRICES AND A CHANCE TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH HIGH COST PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.

THIS EVENT IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:  
MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE EDUCATION FUND  
CHARLES COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
HEALTH CARE for ALL

**HARFORD COUNTY**  
**Virtual Community Forum on Rising Drug Prices**



**SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS**



Barry Glazier  
Harford County Executive  
Van Mitchell  
Prescription Drug Affordability Board Member  
Jim Gutman  
Maryland AARP  
Associate Director  
Professor Ebere Onukwugha  
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative  
Vincent DeMarco  
Maryland AARP  
Associate Director  
Joanie Peka-Malicky  
Singer  
Brian Feldman  
Retired

Join us for the discussion & share your experience with high cost prescription drugs.

**MONDAY NOVEMBER 2, 2020**  
3:00 - 4:30 P.M.  
ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE  
To participate, register today!  
[Click Here](#)

or Watch it live  
<http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/DrugPriceForum>

Learn about Maryland's new Prescription Drug Affordability Board

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR A  
FREDERICK COUNTY  
COMMUNITY FORUM ON RISING DRUG COSTS**

**Special Guest Speakers**



U.S. Congressman Jamie Raskin  
U.S. Congressman David Trone  
County Executive Jan Gardner  
Dr. Barbara Brookmyer  
Delegate Karen Lewis Young  
Senator Brian Feldman  
Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk

**WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 18**  
6:30-7:30PM  
ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

TO PARTICIPATE VIA ZOOM, VISIT:  
<https://bit.ly/2U7IiBK>  
THIS EVENT WILL BE LIVESTREAMED ON THE FCPL FACEBOOK PAGE AT:  
<https://www.facebook.com/fredclibrary/>

Join us for the discussion and share your story about high cost prescription drugs.

Hosted by:



# Prescription Drug Affordability Town Hall Forum

Monday, December 7, 7:00 p.m.



**HEALTH CARE for ALL**



& a Tele-Townhall with SiX

# Key Findings

- Prescription drug affordability is a **significant concern for Marylanders** that spans income, age, and region.
- Marylanders were excited to learn that action is being taken to address prescription drug affordability on the state level; however, they would most like to **see real savings for individual consumers around the state**, not just state and local government entities.
- Participants **voiced frustrations with confusing formularies, a lack of transparency, and discrepancies in drug costs**.
- Marylanders would like the Board to **consider a variety approaches** to making prescription drugs more affordable and would like for the entire supply chain to be considered

# What does “affordability” mean to you?

- “Affordability to me is a common-sense approach. Especially now with the pandemic and the loss of jobs. **I believe drug companies should take into consideration income or lack thereof for their patients.**”
- “**Being able to get the medication needed with or without insurance assistance.**”
- “**Where everyone who needs a prescription can have it filled.**”
- “**The ability to pay for prescriptions without causing a problem to pay for other necessities such as mortgage/rent, food, utilities, etc.**”
- “Affordability means not having to worry about whether you can afford to purchase and take the drug as prescribed, **without sacrificing other essentials in the household budget.**”
- “When it **doesn't cost more than \$100 in copays.**”

# What would you like to see the Board accomplish?

- “Price reductions on some of the most essential and commonly used medications such as insulin and epi pens... for people with life-threatening allergies, **having an epi-pen is not a 'luxury' or a chance that they should need to take.** Insulin has been around for many decades, virtually unchanged, so the rising cost is totally unwarranted and unacceptable.”
- “Define the goals of the Board and what their purpose is and making that well known. **Include addressing the prescription drug insurance confusion that directly impacts drug affordability.**”
- “Develop strategies that make COVID vaccine and other Rx affordable, available, and **account for Rx as part of entire course of treatment.**”
- “To determine a way to **make prescription drugs more affordable for Maryland residents.**”

Is there anything else you would like the Board to know or consider going forward?

- “There are drugs that are literally life saving and there are drugs that are required to manage conditions that would otherwise reduce the quality of life or cause surgeries. **They should start working on the first category of drugs but not lose track of the second category, which is just as important.**”
- “Please keep in mind that **more and more Americans are retiring with inadequate savings**. Most will not be able to afford the basics necessities.”
- “People with commercial insurance or no insurance do best when assistance is offered to help with drug expenses. Those of us with Part D Medicare seem to be left out. I would like to see more equality in drug costs. **Because I am in the coverage gap I am literally counting my pills to see if they will last until Jan 1st when my plan resets.**”
- “Please just **put the interests of the public ahead of the interests of pharmaceutical companies.**”

# MARYLANDERS TELL THEIR STORIES

BURNELL B.

BETHESDA

"I take Ranexa 500mg twice a day and, even with my insurance company paying, I also have to pay \$267.00 out of pocket. I am retired and on a fixed income and this is way out of my range to afford. There is no way pharma company CEOs should become billionaires with the prices they are charging the American people."

"I'm on Social Security and support my grandchildren and daughter as well as myself. I get no financial assistance from anywhere. I have diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, acid reflux, allergies, and depression. I sometimes go months without the many prescriptions I need, I cannot afford the copays."

JANICE G.  
PASADENA

ALLISON W.  
GAITHERSBURG

We shouldn't have to crowdsource the medication that's keeping us alive.

PAT W.  
ANNAPOLIS

"My granddaughter has three stage four cancers. She has to keep working to keep her health insurance. She can't drive anymore, her dad drives her to work. She can barely move without pain but she can't quit. Just one of her meds is \$1200 and there are lots more. She cries from pain and frustration but she is stuck between a rock and a hard place and nowhere to go. She can't keep it up much longer then what does she do? This is not right or moral."



Thank you to the partners who made these forums possible, including:

- Maryland AARP
- Action Now Initiative
- AIDS Health Foundation
- Charles County Public Library
- Ellicott City 50+Center
- Enoch Pratt Free Library
- Frederick County Public Library
- Oakcrest/Erickson Living
- Open Society Institute
- Patients for Affordable Drugs
- State Innovation Exchange
- The Impact Project

**Thank you to the Prescription Drug Affordability Board Members for your participation in these forums.**