



5-12-2025

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House Bill 96 Proponent Testimony

Good afternoon, thank you to Chairwoman Manchester and the Government Oversight and Reform Committee for allowing me to present testimony in support of reforms within the Ohio Budget Bill (HB96) that will allow pharmacies in Ohio to be reimbursed fairly. My name is Marcus Barr, PharmD and I own Barr's Pharmacy, which consists of 4 pharmacies, located in southwest Ohio. I have been an owner of independent pharmacies since 2016 when I bought my first pharmacy in Hillsboro, Ohio. At that time, it was a great profession and viable, small business to own and operate. I was excited to continue the legacy of the previous owners as the only independent pharmacy in town. I was energized to provide top notch pharmacy services to the community that I was in to really help and accommodate the more needy and elderly patients that so desperately need a local community contact that can focus more time and attention on their needs. A whole lot has changed since I took the leap of faith to invest my life savings into becoming a pharmacy owner.

Today, unfortunately, the future is uncertain and that is why I am asking you to keep in place the "fair reimbursement" language that is in HB 96 that the House already passed. This language is vital for the survival of local independent pharmacies and chain pharmacies alike. As the Ohio State Board of Pharmacy and Ohio Pharmacist Association has recently outlined 191 community pharmacies have closed in just 2024 alone, which is about 10% of all community pharmacies in the state. Our opponents are quick to point out that not all the pharmacies that closed are independent pharmacies but why should any of these pharmacies have to close. It is creating pharmacy deserts all over the state and terminating critical access and care to the most vulnerable patients in our state. Obviously, there is a reason for the closures, and it cannot be that none of us know how to run a business. So the unfortunate reality is that the PBMs due to not having any regulation on the state or federal level are continuing to take advantage of patients, employers, and pharmacies without consequence. If we do not take a stand this will only continue to get worse and patient access and care will continue to decline.

Over the last several years, but especially in 2024, I have watched several colleagues close or sell their pharmacies because they can no longer afford to keep operating the pharmacy with claims paid below cost or at such a low rate they cannot cover expenses. It is unfortunate and very sad it has come to this. A few years ago, Ohio Medicaid made the switch to a reimbursement model that has saved the state



an estimated \$140 million, paid pharmacies adequately based on Ohio Acquisition Cost plus a professional dispensing fee, all while getting rid of the big PBM middleman. So, this proven model shows that not only does the PBMs increase cost they also make the process much less transparent than it needs to be. In addition, several other states have already passed legislation like HB96 that has also been proven beneficial for everyone involved.

I sincerely ask that you protect Ohio's remaining independent pharmacies by passing HB96. Please help stop the unfair and almost criminal practices of the PBMs. My pharmacy owner colleagues and myself are hanging on by a thread and desperately need help controlling the PBMs to produce a fair and level playing field. Please keep the "fair pharmacy reimbursement" language in the budget and protect Ohio patients who will lose essential healthcare if their local pharmacies close.

Respectfully,

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