

Kathryn Poe
September 22nd, 2021
SB220 Proponent Testimony

Chairman Hackett, Vice chair Romanchuk, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Insurance committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on SB220, capping cost sharing for insulin medication at 35 dollars. My name is Kathryn Poe, my pronouns are they/she, and I am a resident of Columbus, Ohio living in Senator Craig's district. I am also a bone marrow transplant survivor and rare disease patient.

Today, I'd like to share the story of how I came to advocate for this issue and why insulin affordability is an issue that can affect anyone at any point in their life.

During my teens, I was diagnosed with a number of rare autoimmune disorders, including a rare blood disorder called MAS/HLH. This life threatening blood disease resulted in a number of relapses before the age of 20. I spent a significant part of my teens and twenties living in and out of hospitals and navigating the challenges of high cost prescription medication, specifically high cost biologic medication. Then, my Sophomore year of college at Capital University, I was given the opportunity to receive a life changing non-related donor bone marrow transplant in order to give me a brand new immune system.

In the months after my transplant, I temporarily developed type 1 diabetes as a result of high dose steroids, requiring me to take insulin for the first time in my life. And while you probably typically think about insulin in the context of type 1 or type 2 diabetes, temporary use of insulin therapy is incredibly common for many reasons. Many cancer patients, blood disease patients, and even pregnant women require some form of insulin therapy during their treatment. In fact, according to the CDC, every year, 2% to 10% of pregnancies in the United States are affected by gestational diabetes. Simply put, insulin is a drug with many clinical uses that is as necessary to all of our bodies as water and air.

As someone who has spent the past decade of their life on high cost medication, access to insulin and its out of control cost immediately drew my solidarity and attention, even after I was done with my treatment.

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Insulin is used by more than 100 million Americans each year, was invented more than 100 years ago, costs less than 5 dollars to produce per vial, and yet has an average co-pays of upwards of 250 dollars plus the cost of supplies.

For comparison, not even my highest priced biologic medication for my rare disease, a drug that cost 60,000 a month without insurance, that is used by far less people with much higher cost to formulate, had a co-pay of more than 50 dollars. Insulin is truly unique in its high co-pay price.

And that unnecessary cost kills. Since 2012, the cost of insulin in the United States has doubled, forcing many people who are dependent on insulin to ration or attempt to go without, leading to deadly consequences. Even for those like myself, who required insulin temporarily, a single missed dose could have dramatically worsened my condition or killed me. When we allow insulin prices to remain out of control, we are allowing the greed of a few pharmaceutical companies to threaten the lives of Ohioans.

About a year after learning about the high cost of insulin and having my own experience, I was sitting in my college dorm room when I read an article about this law being passed in Colorado. I immediately knew that this bill could be passed in Ohio and began working to pass it here. In the three years since then, a similar bill has been passed in 15 states. And while it is important to stress that this law is by far not the final solution to this problem, nor will it solve the problem for everyone, it is a strong first step in the right direction and will change the lives of those who use insulin with state regulated insurance plans.

This is a necessary piece of legislation, being asked for and proposed by patients, that expands access to a drug that many Ohioans use at some point in their lives. Insulin must be accessible to all Ohioans and SB220 is a strong step in the right direction.

I urge you to vote yes and pass HB220.