



**Pharmacists United for
Truth & Transparency**
TruthRx.org



November 28, 2022

Senator Stephen A. Huffman
Members of the Ohio Senate Health Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Senator Huffman and Members of the Ohio Senate Health Committee,

I write to you today to ask your support for the passage of HB 135, legislation which, if passed, would give the most vulnerable patients some much-needed relief at the pharmacy counter by allowing the use of prescription drug copay financial assistance to count toward the patient's annual deductible.

My home state, Arizona, passed a similar law in 2019 which has since given the more than 840,000 patients who rely on some form of copay assistance affordable access to the medications they need most, **without shifting so-called "additional costs" onto the health plan payer/sponsor.**

Patients who typically rely on copay assistance are those living with debilitating chronic illness, conditions they must endure in the absence of a cure. Because chronic illness medications often fall into "specialty" categories and lack a generic equivalent, they tend to be more expensive. Patients already dealing with chronic illness should not be further penalized by disallowing copay assistance to count toward their deductible.

Pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and their health-insurer corporate parents/partners will argue that copay assistance is "unfair" and "shifts the burden" of high drug costs onto the health plan sponsor.¹ **Their argument is abjectly false** - PBMs and health plan payers do not "pay more" than their contracted drug spend percentage. Patient copay assistance is the same as if the patient had paid out of pocket, with no change to the plan payer's portion of the cost share.

Giving patients every opportunity to access their medication affordably will also cut down on the costs associated with medication non-adherence - avoidable, additional costs that truly are shifted onto the health plan payer (and often the taxpayers) when patients are forced to ration or completely forgo their medications altogether.

¹ It should be noted that pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) - who energetically oppose drug manufacturers providing coupons to patients to alleviate high drug costs - require those same drug manufacturers to pay PBMs "rebates" (commissions on the sale of certain drugs, typically brand and specialty) in order to include the manufacturer's product on the patient's drug plan formulary.

On behalf of Ohio's patients and their pharmacists, we appeal to you to support and advance HB 135 and help those patients access the medications they most need.

We greatly appreciate your consideration. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach me at the email address below, or on my mobile phone at (505) 480-4150.

Yours in advocacy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Whitney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Monique Whitney
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