

I am a third-generation community pharmacist in Cincinnati. My business partner and I have been working at this pharmacy since high school, both serving as interns during pharmacy school and then taking over ownership in 2021. Over these years we have seen the overwhelming influence of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs). Once, merely a claims processing entity akin to Visa or Mastercard, these companies now have control over the majority of pharmacy claims. They dictate copays, reimbursements, formularies and auditing of prescriptions.

As they have taken on this larger role, reimbursements for drugs have decreased below medication cost with increasing frequency. This affects our ability to help patients afford their medications and access them in a timely and safe manner. Drug prices have sky-rocketed, so patients must use their pharmacy benefits to access them, yet my pharmacy does not get paid what the drug costs from my wholesaler. Compounding the frustration, the pharmacy is constantly paid a \$0 professional fee to cover my duties as a pharmacist for dispensing the medication safely and counseling the patient.

HB505 will put into place some stop-gaps for PBMs operating in Ohio. The bill will focus on reimbursing the actual acquisition cost of the medication. Contractually, the PBMs must reimburse us our cost plus a professional fee. This has worked well under the re-worked Medicaid program, which follows this “cost-plus” model. The pharmacists are paid a fair fee for their time and expertise they provide to every patient.

We proudly serve patients on the Westside of Cincinnati. My grandfather opened Hart Pharmacy’s doors in 1960. We have been trusted with the care and education of our patients, some into the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generations of families that started with us all those years ago. I know my patients: we see each other at the grocery store; our children are on the same baseball team; we go to the same church; we walk our dogs at the same park. I care deeply about their well-being and am invested in their health significantly more than just handing them medications. I have had to turn patients away over the last two years due to losing hundreds of dollars filling their families’ prescriptions. A pharmacy should not just be about dispensing a medication, it should be about caring for people. My grandpa knew that, my mom after him; I believe in this so much that I am fighting daily to continue to care for the people in my community. HB505 begins a process to again put patients before giant corporations focused on increasing profits year after year.

I humbly ask you to support HB505 and protect community pharmacies. Allow them to thrive in Ohio once again.

Sarah Priestle, PharmD, RPh

Co-Owner Hart Pharmacy

Cincinnati