



# Durbin calls for action on skyrocketing prescription drug costs

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CENTREVILLE – As the costs of prescription drugs continue to soar for patients under the Trump Administration, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today called for action on several pieces of legislation that would hold the pharmaceutical industry accountable, curb price hikes, and bring much-needed transparency to price setting for prescription drugs in the U.S. Durbin was joined by officials from SIHF Healthcare, Touchette Regional Hospital, and a patient who has struggled with rising prescription drug costs.

**“Health care is too expensive for too many working families, and the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs is only exacerbating the problem, causing higher out-of-pocket costs at the pharmacy and ever-rising insurance premiums. Not to mention what these escalating price tags mean for our federal Medicare and Medicaid programs, which are supported with taxpayer dollars,”** Durbin said. **“If they are serious about wanting to reduce drug spending for hard-working families, then President Trump and Congressional Republicans should join Democrats on the many initiatives we have led to lower drug costs. Americans are being squeezed at the pharmacy counter, it’s about time we take action on real solutions.”**

Since President Trump took office in January 2017, the cost of Lyrica, made by Pfizer and used for seizures and pain, has gone up 29 percent. Humira, made by AbbVie and used for rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis, has gone up 19 percent. Xarelto, made by Janssen and used for blood clots, has gone up 17 percent. Each of these drugs costs Medicare \$2 billion annually, but instead of actions to lower prescription drug costs, pharmaceutical manufacturers doubled down on price hikes and spent more than \$100 million on television ads to inflate demand for these medications.

Durbin has introduced various pieces of legislation to help reduce prescription drug costs for Americans. Recently, he [introduced](#) two bipartisan amendments to the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies funding bill – part of the “minibus” appropriations package considered by the Senate

last month – to clarify current law and provide the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with \$1 million to implement rules requiring pharmaceutical companies to list prices of their prescription drugs in direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertisements. The bipartisan amendments would help to empower patients, promote transparency, and lower prescription drug costs. The bipartisan amendments are cosponsored by Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and the policy is endorsed by President Donald Trump, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar, FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, AARP, and the American Medical Association. A recent Kaiser Health News survey found that 76 percent of Americans—split evenly across political party—support this initiative.

Durbin has also long supported efforts to increase competition and help lower drug costs for seniors and persons with disabilities who are enrolled in the Medicare Part D prescription drug program. For over a decade, he has introduced the *Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act*, which would finally allow Medicare to negotiate for the cost of medications on behalf of seniors, and provide an alternative to the confusing private prescription drug plans, marketing practices, and formulary changes that have made deciphering among Medicare Part D plans difficult.

Durbin is also an original co-sponsor of the bipartisan *CREATES Act*, which would target abusive delay tactics that are being used by brand-name drug companies to block entry of affordable generic drugs. Common delay tactics include brand-name companies preventing potential generic competitors from obtaining samples to perform necessary testing or participating in a shared safety protocol. The *CREATES Act* would allow generic drug manufacturers that are unable to obtain the samples necessary to gain FDA approval to file for injunctive relief in federal court. This legislation was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee in June 2018.

Patients have been dealing with skyrocketing drug costs for years, with 12 of the top 20 drugs paid for by Medicare increasing by 50 percent in the past years—six with price hikes of more than 100 percent. President Trump has promised to bring down drug prices, but since he took office, average drug prices have increased and there have been no new rules implemented to rein in costs. Instead of working to bring down drug costs for patients, President Trump and congressional Republicans gave Big Pharma companies a \$40 billion tax break last year. Five of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the U.S. (AbbVie, Amgen, Eli Lilly, Merck, and Pfizer) received \$6.3 billion in tax breaks.