

Why North Dakota Need to Tackle Prescription Drugs

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Chair Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

Five years ago, I nearly lost my life to leukemia, but it wasn't because of the disease, which was under control. It was because my wife and I couldn't afford my medication. Even though my doctors warned me the cancer would return if I didn't take the medicine, I did not fill my prescription through my Part D plan because of the cost. Luckily, I found a Canadian pharmacy, and I am healthy enough to advocate for others who aren't as fortunate as I am.

My story might seem dramatic, but it is shockingly common. [Surveys](#) have found that 79% of Americans think the price of medications is "unreasonable," and one in three adults did not take a medication as prescribed because of the price. There have been several high profile stories of people dying because they could not afford insulin. No one should be forced to make these horrible choices. That is why I share my story and have been volunteering with AARP to urge both our state and federal legislators to take action to lower prescription drug prices.

I know I'm not alone in wanting North Dakota to act to lower prescription drug prices. Voters have consistently made it clear that they – we – want policymakers to take action: according to [polling from the Kaiser Family Foundation](#), 87% of adults think it is very or extremely important for Congress to lower prescription drug prices. While Congress certainly has a role, the State should act as well.

We need commonsense measures that address the root cause of the problem –it must address pharma's ever-growing high list prices, not just shift costs around in the system. That is why I support measures like the bills before you to allow for safe legal wholesale importation from Canada. The Trump administration authorized the rules and North Dakota should not sit idly by. Until the State acts, North Dakotans like me will continue to make hard choices about whether to stop taking a needed medication, skip other bills, or buy lower-cost drugs elsewhere. **Before I turned to Canada – a choice not everyone could or should make – I was staring down a bill of \$2,400 a month, or almost \$30,000 a year.** A researcher who discovered my medication has actually denounced the manufacturer's price, [asking](#) "When do you cross the line from essential profits to profiteering?" It's a shame Americans have to turn to foreign countries for affordable prices on life-saving drugs but if that will help consumers like me, I support it.

I know from telling my own story and hearing from others that there's a nationwide army of us that has come together for change. Some of us have joined because we are patients, some because we are caregivers, and some because we are taxpayers who know the current system is unsustainable and worry about the consequences for Medicare and other important programs.

Enough is enough. I live in the greatest country in the world, but I believe my government is failing me. It's time to take action and pass one of the bills before you to allow North Dakotans to access safe legal importation. North Dakotans and all Americans can't afford to wait any longer.