



# NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

2139 Silas Deane Highway  
Suite 205  
Rocky Hill, CT 06067  
(860) 257-8066

Kurt Fuchs, LCSW, President  
Stephen A Karp, LMSW, Executive Director  
[naswct@naswct.net](mailto:naswct@naswct.net)

## **Comments on the Healthcare Cabinet Recommendations for Addressing High Prescription Drug Prices**

On behalf of the 2600 plus members of the National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter we offer the following comments on the Healthcare Cabinet's recommendations on the high cost of prescription drugs. We thank the Cabinet for taking on this issue and recognize the amount of work put into the report.

We are supportive of the Priorities recommendations offered by the Cabinet. We agree with the need for a Drug Review Board and recommend that such a board have one-third of the appointees be consumers who significantly utilize prescription drugs, especially high cost prescriptions.

We applaud the recommendation that consumers pay out-of-pocket costs based on the discounted price the PBM has negotiated with the insurer. This is the case for other parts of health care delivery and we see no justification for pharmaceuticals to be exempt from this otherwise common practice.

A revolving loan program to assist with upfront costs is worth further exploration and consideration. The way some insurance plans are set up creates financial hardships for moderate income households that have prescription coverage that requires initial high out-of-pocket costs. This can deter consumers from filling necessary prescriptions or leaves the consumer with a choice of paying for prescriptions but not paying for other necessary expenses.

Just as we have regulatory controls for insurers seeking premium rate increases, CT should institute similar controls for increases in prescription drugs. A threshold can be set as to the percentage of increase allowed and increases above the threshold should go through a public review process where the manufacturer must justify the requested increase, the public may comment and a review board will set the allowable amount of increase.

We support pursuing permission for the wholesale importation of drugs from Canada. The US pays about twice the amount as Canada does for the same drugs. There would be significant drug savings from importation, which may lead drug manufacturers to reduce US costs.

We are concerned that the comment period for this extensive report of a complicated issue was too short. We encourage the Cabinet to extend the public comment period until its next meeting.

Not in the report however needing action is the responsibility of drug manufacturers of opioid drugs for the current opioid epidemic. If CT is not yet doing so, CT should pursue legal action against opioid manufacturers, preferably in collaboration with other states. Similar to the tobacco settlement it is clear that opioid manufacturers misled prescribers and the public as to the safety of opioids. Manufacturers should be held financially accountable with financial penalties going directly toward the treatment of and prevention of opioid addictions. The over prescribing of opioids has directly impacted on drug costs thus we believe this issue is within the purview of the Cabinet's report.

Social workers daily see clients who are struggling to pay for necessary medications. Individuals are going without needed items due to lack of funds exasperated by the high costs of drugs. In response many consumers are taking less than the full dosage prescribed, are skipping dosages or simply not filling prescriptions due to the high cost. All of these steps add stress to a person's life that has its own health implications (high stress can lead to anxiety and depression), and by not being able to afford medications as prescribed often leads to reduced health outcomes and higher medical costs that could have been prevented. The Cabinet's recommendations are an excellent start at addressing these issues.