

**Dr. Michael and Marilyn Worner's testimony for the Senate Human Services Committee- -
January 27, 2021**

Chairwoman Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee- - We are Dr. Michael and Marilyn Worner and have resided in Fargo for the past four years after living in Mayville for thirty years. We are both retired educators.

We are testifying this morning in support of Senate Bill 2170 and are very grateful that Senator Anderson and this committee are tackling this challenging and critical issue.

The rising costs of prescription drugs affects everyone in our great state- - and especially impacts older North Dakotans like ourselves. Most of us live on very modest and fixed incomes and cannot absorb the continuous escalating costs of health care including prescription drugs.

This year my wife and I will declare \$22,000.00 in medical costs when we file our income tax. This represent over 30% of our total income. Our prescription drug costs are a major part of this expense and cause us constant concern. We worry that we will be prescribed a drug that we simply cannot afford. You are likely aware according to ARRP that between 2012 and 2017 the average amount of prescription drugs has increased by 57%.

I would like to share my personal story related to prescription drugs and the strategies that I must use to lower my drug costs. I have an eye problem called "dry eyes" that is an issue that cannot be resolved by using over the counter medications. My eye doctor prescribed a medicine that seems to relieve my problem, but costs about \$1,700 for a three month supply- -my insurance pays approximately \$1,600 of that cost and I pay \$120.00. I must use the medication twice each day in order to relieve the symptom of itching which results in painful rubbing of my eyes. About two years ago, when I talked to my doctor and informed him that I was having difficulty paying for the expensive medication, he suggested that I use only half of the prescribed medication daily. He stated that there was not an alternative medication. I have been able to follow his recommendation with fairly good results. This is one method I use to save money - - by rationing my drugs.

A second strategy that I have used to avoid high prescription costs is that I am able to purchase this same medication out of the country at a significantly lower cost. I am able to get a three month supply for about \$60.00- - compared to \$1,700.00 that it costs me here with my insurance plan. A point of interest is that the medication that I purchase from another country is manufactured in Waco, TX! In my opinion, this is not right. Why can someone purchase a prescription drug for \$60.00 when I am paying \$1,700.00 for that same drug?

My wife and I are very concerned about the skyrocketing costs of medical and prescription drugs. Will we be able to continue to purchase prescription drugs out of the country? How long will we be able to pay for our prescription drugs?

We are thankful that you are dealing with these important issues and hopeful that you will pass Senate Bill 2170.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We are available to answer any questions that you might have.

