

January 16, 2023

Chair Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

My name is Bob Entringer. I live in Bismarck and I am a volunteer and member of the AARP North Dakota Speaker's Bureau. I am testifying this morning in support of SB 2031.

In 2001, my wife was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease and has three associated syndromes/conditions for which she relies medication to control the symptoms and help to prevent further deterioration in her health. Like many North Dakotans, we have experienced the high cost of prescription drugs. A number of years ago she was prescribed a medication to try and control one of her symptoms; she went to the pharmacy to get the prescription filled only to find out our cost was going to be \$800 per month; needless to say she declined to fill the prescription. While there are other medications to try and control the symptom, we are not sure what impact the other drug would have had on her symptom. Additionally, I was diagnosed with a blood clotting disorder in 2009; unfortunately the Hematologist at the clinic felt I did not have to be on a blood thinner long term which resulted in me experiencing a pulmonary embolism so now I am on a blood thinner permanently. Prior to becoming Medicare eligible my cost for the medication was \$10 per month due to a savings plan offered by the manufacturer; once I went on Medicare I was no longer eligible for the savings plan and my medication increased to \$130 per month or I could opt for a 90 day prescription for \$425.

Fortunately, I did discover another program through the same manufacturer and was able to get a 90-day prescription for \$240. Unfortunately, the program ends December 31st each year and I will be able to re-apply for it later April 1; however, there is no certainty I will be eligible. Finally, I would like to tell you about the drug cost for a disease my mother-in-law has; again, she is fortunate that a foundation provides her medication at no cost IF they are able to get it! However, during the pandemic, it was difficult to get because the medication was also being used to treat COVID-19 patients and as a result she had to obtain a 1-month prescription from a specialty pharmacy for \$2,300!

Right now, your committee has an opportunity to pass SB 2031, a pilot program that could lower the cost of the most expensive drugs for North Dakotans. As I understand it, the program will be piloted for retired state employees. If it works, it could be expanded to more North Dakotans. I am in full support of any legislation that can give North Dakotans more affordable and reasonable options for their medications. We have spent too much time on the phone with our pharmacist or searching the internet trying to find the lowest price. We need your committee and the Senate to support SB 2031 and find a better way to access affordable prescription drugs.

Thank you again for listening to our family's and other AARP members concerns as you work on this issue. I wholeheartedly appreciate any effort to make medicine more affordable. SB 2301 is a step in the right direction, and I urge you give the bill a favorable recommendation.