

Testimony of Marlee Seibold for HB 1114 – Insulin & Diabetes Supplies

Dear Chairman Schauer and Committee Members,

My name is Marlee Seibold, and I'd like to urge you to support HB 1114. I was born and raised in Minot and have lived in Bismarck for the last 10 years. I have been lucky enough to call North Dakota my home my entire life. At 7 years old, I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. For anyone unfamiliar with Type 1 Diabetes, it is an autoimmune disease that prevents your pancreas from producing insulin. As with any autoimmune disease, I did not do this to myself, and no one did it to me. Autoimmune diseases happen when your immune system attacks healthy cells in your body which then causes a lifelong chronic disease. That means, since I was 7 years old, I have had to inject insulin every single day, multiple times a day, to make up for the insulin my body cannot produce on its own.

For the last 3 years, I have worked for the American Diabetes Association, the nation's leading voluntary health organization fighting to end the diabetes epidemic. Every day I work to help advocate for people just like me to get the care and help they deserve. I have first-hand experience with this disease, which means I know how much time, energy, and money is spent on managing it. Recently, I filled the 4 different types of insulins I use every day, and the Contiguous Glucose Monitors that I use to track my blood sugar. That's it. I did not fill any extra supplies, needles, or alcohol swabs. The over the counter price for those medications was thousands of dollars. Thousands of dollars it costs just to make sure I wake up tomorrow. That price is not yearly, those prescriptions will last a couple months. That is not including the doctor's appointments I make throughout the year, and all the other supplies I need to take that insulin or to help with my management. I want to be clear; this is life or death. Living with type 1 diabetes is making life and death decisions all day, every day, 24/7. If I don't take insulin, I could die. If I take too much insulin, I could die. Poor management of my blood sugar can have terrible consequences in a matter of days.

Imagine anyone living with diabetes who doesn't have the means to pay that price. Who has to pay for food or rent before they can pay for the medicines they need to live. Well, in my line of work, I run into a lot of those people. They ration their insulins, and don't take what they need or don't take any at all. They can't pay to see doctors, or have the devices needed to help them manage their disease. They either end up with serious health complications, or they die. This insulin cap, that has been proven through the pilot program, to have little financial impact on the state, could make a huge impact on those living with diabetes around North Dakota. Guaranteeing people will have access to affordable insulin could save lives.

For over 20 years, I have watched this disease take a financial and emotional toll on myself, and my loved ones. This insulin cap could help those families in our state who were just like mine. Life flipped upside down with a newly diagnosed 7-year-old and a laundry list of new things they need to do and worry about. Vote yes on this bill so it can take at least one burden away from them as they navigate their new normal. It will also help people like myself, who have lived with diabetes for years and never felt truly secure in their ability to have the medicine they need. My Mom has always told me, one of her biggest fears was one day I would not be able to afford my insulin. Well, we have an opportunity to help make that fear a distant memory for the people of North Dakota.

Please vote yes on HB 1114. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

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