



1199SEIU

AARP
Massachusetts

Atrius Health

Boston Center
for Independent
LivingDisability Policy
ConsortiumGreater Boston
Interfaith OrganizationHealth Care For
AllHealth Law
AdvocatesJewish Alliance for
Law & Social ActionMassachusetts
Association for
Mental HealthMassachusetts
Chapter of the
American College
of PhysiciansMassachusetts Medical
SocietyMassachusetts
Senior Action
CouncilMassachusetts Society
for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Children

MASSPIRG

Right Care Alliance

Ensuring Access to Medications in Massachusetts During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Economic Recession

- The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the importance of access to affordable medications—from inhalers to insulin—to protect those with chronic conditions at highest risk for complications from the virus.
- With individuals and families struggling financially in the face of the pandemic, now more than ever we need to ensure all prescription drugs, including those for COVID-19, are affordable without burdening the state and the health care system.
- We must prioritize improving access to affordable medications for communities of color and low-income communities who have always faced disproportionate barriers in accessing medications and are being hit hardest by the pandemic.

Affordability for Chronic Disease and COVID-19 Medications: To respond to the needs of individuals at risk for COVID-19 due to chronic conditions that disproportionately affect communities of color and low-income communities, legislation should:

- Reduce cost-sharing for medications for certain chronic conditions that are risk factors for COVID-19 complications.
 - The cost-sharing reductions should apply to the three most expensive and widely used drugs that treat five conditions – diabetes, heart conditions, respiratory diseases, autoimmune disorders, and HIV/AIDS – with the list of medications subject to Department of Public Health approval.
 - The cost-sharing reductions should be temporary for a period of 18 months.
- Reduce cost-sharing for FDA approved COVID-19 vaccinations and medications.
- Establish a Health Policy Commission (HPC) review process, similar to the recently adopted MassHealth process, for the medications where a cost-sharing reduction is applied to ensure that system costs are addressed and costs are not passed on through higher premiums.
 - The review process should take into account both affordability for consumers and costs to the health care system, include a public input process, and ultimately allow for public disclosure of a target value for a drug if the price is determined to be unreasonable or excessive and the drug manufacturer does not take steps to reduce costs.

Affordability for Families in Financial Crises: To respond to the needs of individuals and families struggling to afford medications due to the economic collapse caused by the pandemic, and especially communities of color and low-income communities, legislation should include additional policies:

- Expand the HPC review process to include review of: 1) prescription drugs that have had steep price increases in the last three years, and 2) the highest cost and most widely utilized prescription drugs in the state according to the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA).
- Ensure consumers are informed of their lowest cost options at the pharmacy.
 - Pharmacists should inform consumers, utilizing several options including written signs or verbal communication, if a prescription at the retail price without insurance would be less expensive than the cost-sharing amount when using insurance.
- Increase state oversight of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs).
 - Require PBMs to be licensed through the Division of Insurance.
 - Require PBMs to submit data to CHIA on factors such as rebates and fees received from manufacturers and the amounts retained