

Dear Chair Donovan, House HHS Members, and Rep Morales

Our names are Brian Schattle and Victor Dampsey, and we are medical students at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University in Providence.

We are writing to express our strong support for House Bill 5302, which seeks to cap the out-of-pocket costs for asthma medications and related equipment to \$25 per 30-day supply. This is an issue that impacts both patients and our healthcare system as a whole, and we believe this bill represents a critical step forward in addressing the healthcare needs of our community.

As medical students, we have had the privilege of working with patients who are struggling with asthma and assisting in community outreach efforts. Specifically, we are involved in fundraising efforts for an asthma camp held by Hasbro Children's Hospital that educated children on controlling their severe asthma. We have been thrilled by the community support that several organizations and companies in Providence have for supporting improved asthma management, and we hope we can say the same for you on this bill.

One of the most common challenges we have noticed that patients face is the cost of their medications. For many patients, the price of asthma inhalers and related devices can be prohibitive, often forcing them to choose between paying for their medications and other essential needs. For example, inhalers can cost anywhere from \$50 to \$500, depending on the medication. This makes adherence to prescribed asthma treatments a financial challenge, particularly for those without adequate insurance coverage.

The consequences of high out-of-pocket costs for asthma medications are not just financial. They have serious health implications. Studies have shown that when patients cannot afford their medications, they are more likely to miss doses, which leads to poorly controlled asthma. This, in turn, increases the risk of asthma attacks, hospitalizations, and even emergency room visits. In fact, asthma exacerbations are a leading cause of emergency care visits and hospital admissions in the United States.

The impact of poorly managed asthma extends beyond the individual. According to the CDC, asthma costs the U.S. economy over \$80 billion annually, including lost productivity and healthcare expenses. By ensuring that patients can afford their asthma medications, this bill has the potential to reduce these economic burdens, improving both individual health outcomes and overall societal well-being.

In conclusion, we urge you to support House Bill 5302 to ensure that Rhode Islanders living with asthma are not forced to choose between their health and their finances. By capping the out-of-pocket cost for asthma medications, this bill will help improve adherence to treatments, reduce hospitalizations, and ultimately lead to better health outcomes for our community.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to demonstrate our support for House Bill 5302. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Brian Schattle and Victor Dampsey