

Submitter: Tashrique Rahman
On Behalf Of: Pharmacists for Single Payer
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

My name is Tashrique Rahman and I am an oncology pharmacist, working in the medical field for the past 9 years. I am not here to spit out facts because we all know that the current healthcare system is a sham designed to extract money from vulnerable Americans in the form of monthly premiums, co-pays, and cost share. I am here to speak about my experience in healthcare. Most of my patients have healthcare through work, family or some other means and yet they are opting out of healthcare because they simply cannot afford to participate anymore. In oncology, everyday I see patients who have met their deductible and yet are forced to spend thousands of dollars out of pocket in lifesaving or life extending oral chemotherapy. That's their Copay! My patients who are fully insured are being forced to look for grants to help cover their co-pays or pay for drugs that the insurance companies will simply not pay for. Needless to say these grants are not in abundance, compounded by the fact that every year drug manufacturers are ending their free-drug programs. It is not uncommon for my patients to delay or, even worse, stop their treatments due to the astronomical price tag. As oncology patients, they do not have a choice in where they seek treatment or where they get their medications as it is dictated by the insurance companies.

In America, all it takes is one chronic disease to start losing everything; your pension, retirement, life-time savings, everything. An example that hits close to home, is my mom's medical story. My mother is a first generation American immigrant, who emigrated to this country for a better life and now cannot afford her medical bills despite being fully insured. Countless times my siblings and I have had to pay to cover her medical expenses, spending over twenty thousand dollars in less than two years. Every time she seeks medical help she is burdened by the prospect of high medical costs that her Walmart salary simply cannot cover. Arguably, she had better access to healthcare in a third world nation where she is from, than in the United States of America. This cannot be our REALITY. This is not the promise of a first world nation or the 'American Dream'. We DESERVE BETTER. We need universal coverage TODAY. Not tomorrow, next week or next year. I implore that the Universal Health Governance Board gets the funding it needs to succeed.