



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

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Testimony on S.411, “An Act Establishing the MA Prescription Drug Fair Pricing Program”

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The high price of prescription drugs are a large part of the high cost of health care, both to the Commonwealth and to individuals. These high prices prevent many individuals from taking the drugs they need to get and to stay well, and they result in higher costs for the health care the Commonwealth provides.

This bill will lower the price to the Commonwealth for prescription drugs by allowing the Commonwealth to use the full leverage of its total drug purchase volume in negotiating prices with the drug companies. The bill will establish a formulary, or list of approved medicines, and will provide education on the therapeutic and cost-effective use of prescription drugs for consumers, physicians, pharmacists and other health care professionals. Today, the drug companies themselves are the major providers of education on their own drugs, an obvious conflict of interest, which this bill will address.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports this bill because it meets the League standards of achieving quality health care for the largest possible number of people while also achieving cost control.

Similar programs have been proven effective in other states and at the federal level. For instance:

- Maine’s program has reduced the price of brand-name drugs by more than 26% and the price of generic drugs by 51%;
- Illinois, Iowa, South Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin have significantly reduced the cost of prescription drugs in their states through similar programs.;
- the VA’s bulk-purchasing process allows the VA to purchase drugs at prices 60% lower than average retail costs.

Furthermore, we think the legislation is well thought-out because it provides for:

- the participation of relevant state agencies and public and private health benefit plans;
- a drug advisory board including representatives of the relevant medical specialties;
- a preferred drug list that will be reviewed quarterly for clinical efficiency, safety and cost-effectiveness
- many procedures to protect consumer needs, including the ability for doctors to continue to prescribe medicines not on the formulary list when medically necessary.

We urge you to vote in favor of this bill so that the people of Massachusetts and the Commonwealth can reap the benefits it will bring.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration.