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Rep. Hebl: Introduces bill to ensure pharmacies can discuss cheaper drug options

Posted on Friday, Dec 1, 2017

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December 1, 2017 Rep. Gary Hebl, (608) 266-7678

Rep. Hebl Introduces Bill to Ensure Pharmacies

Can Discuss Cheaper Drug Options

(MADISON) – Gary Hebl (D-Sun Prairie) today began circulating a bill aimed at protecting Wisconsin consumers from unfair insurance practices. The bill, LRB-4526, will ensure pharmacists are able to notify insurance policy holders of cheaper alternatives to prescriptions, such as buying generic equivalents or paying cash for drugs instead of going through their insurance plan.

Currently, insurance companies can include provisions in contracts that prohibit pharmacies from letting policy holders know about cheaper alternatives for prescription drugs. LRB-4526 will prevent insurance companies from including these “pharmacist gag rules” in contracts with pharmacies in Wisconsin, paving the way for consumers to learn about ways to save on their prescriptions.

“Right now we have a situation where a drug might cost the pharmacy $10 but, because of their insurance policy, a patient could be charged a $40 copay,” Hebl said. “The pharmacy gets back the cost of the drug and the insurance company pockets the rest as profit. Patients might just pay the inflated price because they are not aware of cheaper options, and could even be kept in the dark about those

options if insurance companies are prohibiting pharmacies from explaining them."

Access to affordable health insurance has been in a state of flux since the beginning of the year, with the Trump administration and a Republican Congress continually trying to gut the Affordable Care Act. Hebl says his bill is a step toward ensuring that each Wisconsin citizen knows all of their health care and prescription drug options and is able to make the decision that is right for them.

"I want to make sure that health care costs remain as manageable as possible," Hebl continued. "By ensuring that pharmacists can discuss the cheapest drug options with consumers, we would move a step closer to that goal."