

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Continues demanding action from Trump administration to hold drug companies accountable for massive price hikes

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, once again pressed HHS Secretary Alex Azar to identify specific actions the Trump Administration is taking to bring down the prices of prescription drugs.

In continuing to demand real action from the Trump Administration to hold the pharmaceutical industry accountable, Senator Baldwin asked Secretary Azar again to commit to transparency for prescription drug companies that jack up their prices and make it harder for families to afford life-saving medications.

“The evidence is clear: brand-name drug corporations continue to jack up prescription drug prices. It’s unfortunate that when it comes to skyrocketing drug costs, this Administration is still all talk and no action,” said Senator Baldwin following today’s hearing. “I’ve heard from countless Wisconsinites who continue to

see dramatic price increases. They are struggling to afford their prescriptions that they have relied on for years and they want Washington to act. My bipartisan FAIR Drug Pricing Act would require transparency and accountability for drug corporations who are jacking up prices for families in need of affordable lifesaving treatments and I am disappointed that the Administration has not yet joined me by supporting this bipartisan effort with Senator McCain.”

Secretary Azar failed to give a straight answer or commit to any policy that would hold prescription drug companies accountable for their recent price hikes, including supporting Senator Baldwin’s bipartisan FAIR Drug Pricing Act. HHS’s own Inspector General recently found that even though seniors used fewer brand-name drugs over five years, Medicare spending on branded drugs increased by more than 62% because of increasing manufacturer prices.

Reports show that last year, the pharmaceutical industry spent over \$170 million on lobbying, deploying over 880 lobbyists to influence Washington. This investment has paid off for their CEOs and shareholders, as first quarter earnings showed seven of the largest drug companies together saw \$12.1 billion in profits since the beginning of 2018. Meanwhile, large drug corporations received a tax cut from the Republican tax bill and have spent a combined \$50 billion on new stock buybacks that enriched shareholders and corporate executives while drastically increasing prices on existing drugs. Furthermore, the 18 pharmaceutical companies in the S&P500 spent an average of ninety-nine percent of their profits on buybacks and dividends over the last ten years.

In February, Senators Baldwin and McCain sent a letter to President Trump urging him to hold the pharmaceutical industry accountable and make good on his promise to lower the skyrocketing prescription drug prices that American families are struggling to afford. Baldwin and McCain co-authored the FAIR Drug Pricing Act, which would begin to address skyrocketing prescription drug prices and hold pharmaceutical companies accountable by requiring transparency for pharmaceutical corporations that plan to increase drug prices. The bill would not prohibit manufacturers from increasing prices, but it would, for the first time, give taxpayers notice of price increases and bring basic transparency to the market for prescription drugs.