

# Office of the Commissioner of Insurance, AARP: Highlight the prescription drug affordability challenges facing Wisconsinites

Posted on Thursday, Apr 14, 2022

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**Madison, Wis.** — This week, Insurance Commissioner Nathan Houdek and Deputy Commissioner Rachel Cissne Carabell met with lawmakers and AARP advocates to listen to their personal stories about the impact of high prescription drug prices.

“Across Wisconsin, too many people are forced to cut pills in half, skip doses, ration their insulin, or not fill prescriptions simply because the cost of those medications is too high,” said Commissioner Houdek. “I am grateful for the committed advocates that sat down with us to share their stories of high drug prices and unexpected price fluctuations that impact their day-to-day lives. Unfortunately, their stories are not unique. That’s why it’s critical that we implement the recommendations of the Governor’s Task Force on Reducing Prescription Drug Prices to help all Wisconsinites afford the medications they need.”

A 2019 study found that three in ten people are not taking medications as prescribed because of the financial burden.<sup>[1]</sup> Insulin has increased in price dramatically rising from \$40 per vial in 2001 to \$289 per vial in 2018 for one commonly used brand.<sup>[2]</sup> Some Wisconsin families are even forced to choose between paying their heating bill or filling their life-saving prescription.

To combat these rising costs, Governor Tony Evers signed [Executive Order #39](#) in

2019 to create a task force focused on reducing prescription drug prices. Commissioner Houdek served as chair of the Governor's task force, coordinating the work of a diverse coalition of pharmaceutical manufacturers, insurers, pharmacy benefit managers, pharmacists, consumer advocates, state agencies, and more who worked to consider and find solutions to this complex issue.

Building on the work of the task force, Governor Evers included 20 of these initiatives as part of his 2021-23 Executive Budget. Altogether, the proposals included in the Governor's budget represent one of the most bold and comprehensive approaches our state has ever undertaken to control drug costs and increase accessibility to prescription medications. These measures were removed from the Governor's budget by the Joint Finance Committee and reintroduced in the "Less for Rx" package by several lawmakers including Representative Lisa Subeck and Senator Kelda Roys. None of the bills included in this package were passed before the Legislature adjourned for the end of session in March.

"It's critical that Wisconsin address prescription drug prices because medicines don't work if people can't afford to take them. Governor Evers' proposals that became the "Less for Rx" package are important steps forward to address rising, out of control prescription drug prices," said Lisa Lamkins, AARP Advocacy Director.

Among the over a dozen measures, the Governor's 2021-23 budget proposals would have created the Office of Prescription Drug Affordability to oversee and regulate the pharmaceutical supply chain and serve as a watchdog for Wisconsin consumers. It would also have created a Prescription Drug Affordability Review Board to set prescription drug spending targets and establish reasonable price limits.

[Learn more about the proposals of the Governor's task force here.](#)