

TESTIMONY by Mary Ann Cumming of Standish

To the members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee,

My name is Mary Ann Cumming. I am 68 years old and I live in Standish, Maine. I am a three-year breast cancer survivor and I am here today in support of the suite of bills which address the skyrocketing cost of prescription drug affordability and accessibility.

My cancer was aggressive and needed to be treated or I would have ended up with an even more serious condition. Left untreated, I was also likely to get lung cancer because of where the tumor was located on my rib cage.

The thing that I have been the most upset about is that there are only three prescription drugs that are available that address my specific type of cancer. The first medication, Tamoxifen, I couldn't take because it can cause blood clots which would have been too dangerous for me. So I started out with the second medication, a generic, but the side effects were so severe, I couldn't even get out of my car. The pain was excruciating. The next medication they put me on started out at \$789 a month which I am going to have to take for five years. I am on year three and it's down to \$365 a month which is \$12.19 cents per pill. I am hearing and talking with people in this same drug class group that are getting the same medication, same dose and everything, for \$30 a month. Because I have insurance, I am paying more than ten times that amount. My friends in other countries on the same drug cannot believe the prices we are being forced to pay. I'm not complaining – I'm glad I am able to afford the medication – but we need a better control system so all of us can afford these drugs that we must take in order to stay healthy. In some cases, these drugs are literally keeping us alive.

The truth is, at the end of the day we all pay, even if we have insurance. As the cost of the drugs go up, the insurance pays more and eventually so do the patients by way of additional co-pays and higher premiums and deductibles. There seems to be no end to it.

My doctor is now telling me that I may need to take this drug for as many as ten years instead of the original five. I need to keep taking this medication because otherwise my doctor fears that other tumors will emerge and then I will really be in trouble. What if it becomes unaffordable? What necessities will I need to go without?

Pharmaceutical companies won't offer me an answer that makes sense. So I turn to you, our state legislators, to stand up for us and to fight these terrible costs that are literally stealing our joy and sometimes our lives. We shouldn't be making decisions about cutting our pills in half or going without food. You know and I know that thousands of Mainers are doing just that. It is time to stop the prescription drug price-gouging and demand a better way to keep these necessary medications within reach. Please pass these bills and let's make this difference together.

Mary Ann Cumming

Standish