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Chairman Vikrey and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dared Price, and I am president of Price Pharmacies Inc. We own 6 pharmacies in South Central Kansas most of which are in rural communities. We purchased our first stores in August of 2010 and recently purchased 4 more in the Derby area. Unfortunately, in that time I have witnessed Pharmacy Benefit Managers morph into a multi-billion-dollar company that steers business out of the state, costing local employers more money, and raising the cost of prescription drugs for our patients. I could speak for days about how pharmacy benefit managers have negatively impacted my business and therefore the local economy but today I am writing solely to represent our local economy and my patients.

I have personally been contacted no fewer than 10 times in the past year by local businesses asking why the cost of prescription drugs are so much. In every case when they ask their pharmacy benefit manager this question, they have been met with a cloud of secrecy and transfers from one call center to another. Our local school district has seen a decline in insurance enrollment every year due to cost. The school superintendent is very concerned that he is losing the ability to compete not only with other states but other businesses as well to retain staff. Again, this past year his insurance is going up. They have tried to identify why the increase and were told the increase is mainly due to pharmaceuticals.

When we took over the new stores in Derby we were suddenly no longer in the network with several plans. Our local county employee insurance has been the hardest to resolve. The HR manager has called no fewer than 5 times in the past few months demanding that we be able to be allowed in the network because the pharmacies we purchased have always been able to fill prescriptions and they keep getting the run around. To date she has gotten 4 different answers of why we aren't allowed in network. Along the same lines as Sedgwick County issue, we were unable to fill for Textron employees due to a "limited network". When OUR customers called to complain to the PBM they were told to go to CVS or use mail order. After several employee complaints to HR and several of months of our pharmacies having to make charge accounts and hold claims, we were finally allowed access. This process shouldn't have to be this hard! It discourages local business, and this is far from free market practices.

Our patients simply have no choice in today's market. Every single day at the pharmacy, we help someone who has an issue with a chain pharmacy they have been steered to use or a mail order problem. I even have a handful of employees (who are on their spouse's insurance) that can't fill their prescriptions at the place they earn their paychecks! They either have to drive 40 miles away to the nearest "preferred pharmacy" which their PBM owns or use a mail order pharmacy which their PBM also owns. It doesn't seem right for an insurance to be able to direct business to themselves does it? Very anti-competitive and not free market whatsoever.



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Mail order is a complete disaster for most patients and is the opposite of good healthcare. I cannot tell you how many times I have caught something by actually talking to the patient when they are picking up their medications whether it be a dosage change, OTC recommendation, or a suggestion to go see their doctor. I feel it is my duty as a pharmacist to make sure my patients understand why they are taking their medications, what they can expect as far as results/side effects, and answer any questions they may have. In an environment when physicians are forced to spend less and less time with patients, we can help fill the education void that may be left. In fact pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare professionals seeing most of our patients up to 30 times a year. This doesn't happen in mail order. How many of you have a relationship with your mail order pharmacist?

Another of our patients is a busy working mom on our med sync program. We line up all her meds to fill together and send reminders throughout the month. This helps her be compliant with her medications. There is one med she must get at a specialty pharmacy that is owned by her pharmacy benefit manager. She has nothing but issues every single month including not receiving deliveries on time or the medication simply not being sent due to insurance denial. She is asked personal questions that she doesn't feel comfortable talking about with someone she doesn't know and will never meet that is 1000 miles away for all she knows. This has resulted in her missing several doses and big frustration on her part as well as her physician.

The last story I will tell is a personal one. My father in law was diagnosed with esophageal cancer several months ago. He has been to many appointments and was prescribed a chemotherapy medication. Of course we are not able to provide care to our family. That would be too simple right? He has to use a mail order pharmacy that surprise, surprise is owned by his pharmacy benefit manager. When mail order called, the only question that was asked was what his address was.... No counseling, no special instructions, no asking what other meds he was on, absolutely nothing. Please explain to me how this drug is special other than the fact that the mail order pharmacy is able to profit off of this high cost med and please explain to me how this is better care than having a conversation about this drug with his local pharmacy and family?

I hope I have conveyed to you by these examples to why we are living in a broken pharmacy system. By steering patients to their own companies, PBM's have created monopolies that discourage free market practices that would drive prices down for patients and employer groups. I may not be the smartest pharmacist but it doesn't take a genius to follow the dollar. Employer groups can't afford insurance for their employees, employees can't afford medications or insurance, and PBMs are making record profit year after year. I am asking for your support for HB 2598. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

Dared Price, PharmD

President, Price Pharmacies Inc.