Testimony: House Bill 12 (D. Bentley)
AARP Kentucky State President, Charlotte Whittaker

House Health and Welfare Committee – February 13, 2020

Good Afternoon, my name is Charlotte Whittaker. I am the volunteer State President for AARP Kentucky. It’s an honor to represent our 450,000 AARP Kentucky Members and ask for your support of House Bill 12.

For more than 60 years, AARP has empowered people 50-plus live their best life. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan social mission organization with a membership.

We are calling on states nationwide to pass commonsense, bipartisan legislation like Representative Danny Bentley’s House Bill 12 (supported by dozens of House Co-Sponsors).

There are 508,321 people with diabetes in Kentucky. One in eight people living in Kentucky have diabetes, and many of those are in eastern Kentucky, where some of the highest rates of diabetes can be found.

In Kentucky, diagnosed diabetes costs $5.2 billion a year, according to the American Diabetes Association. Kentuckians located in Appalachia also face a higher diabetic mortality rate — 32% higher than the national rate, according to the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Insulin prices have skyrocketed by more than 550% over the last 14 years, and for many diabetics who need insulin to live, and paying for it is a daily struggle.

One example: Lantus, a form of insulin used to treat diabetes, increased from $2,907 per year to $4,702 per year.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the high price of insulin can lead some patients to begin rationing their diabetes medication or not fully comply with dosing as prescribed by their doctor. Furthermore, 10% increase in insulin adherence rates can produce up to a 29% decrease in overall health care costs related to diabetes; it is important to enact policies to reduce the costs for Kentuckians with diabetes to obtain life-saving and life-sustaining insulin.

Prescription drugs don’t work if you can’t afford them. And access to affordable prescription drugs, like insulin, are a top priority for older Kentuckians.
Older Americans are hit especially hard. Medicare Part D enrollees take an average of 4-5 prescriptions per month, and their average annual income is around $26,000. One in three Americans has not taken a medication as prescribed because of the cost.

In closing, no Kentuckian should be forced to choose between putting food on the table or buying a lifesaving medication.

Thank You for your consideration.

We urge you to vote “Yes” in support House Bill 12.

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