RYAN A. BIZZARRO, CHAIRMAN

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMONWEALTH of PENNSYLVANIA

House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

Independent Pharmacies

Wednesday, May 15, 2024 | 10:00 a.m.

Representative Kyle Donahue

OPENING REMARKS

10:00 a.m. Rep. Kyle Donahue, D-Lackawanna

PANEL ONE

10:10 a.m. Eric Pusey, Owner

Better Health Pharmacy & Wellness

Tom DePietro, Owner DePietro's Pharmacy

Q & A with Legislators



ERIC PUSEY R.PH.

CONTACT

Olyphant, PA 18447 **Mobile:** 570-498-0282
rprp3@aol.com

EDUCATION

May 1982 Bachelor of Science: Pharmacy **Temple University School of Pharmacy**, Philadelphia, PA

CERTIFICATIONS

CDCES- Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

I bring 42 years of progressively responsible high-volume retail pharmacy development and management skills in the field of Pharmacy. My expertise includes disease state management, long-term care consulting, district pharmacy management and personnel development. My experience as a pharmacy development manager included responsibility for 90 pharmacists and 38 stores in the Scranton-Wilkes-Barre area. In addition to pharmacy personnel recruitment, I established pharmacy standards and procedures, and implemented training programs for technicians and pharmacists. While at Rite Aid, I also developed a partnership with the Nesbitt School of Pharmacy at Wilkes University to develop clinical retail internship rotations and to provide consultation services as part of the strategic planning committee. For the last 20 years, I have been the owner and manager of Better Health Pharmacy & Wellness in Olyphant, PA. I also hold certification as a Diabetes Educator (CDE) from the National Certification Board for Diabetes Educators since 2000. My pharmacy includes a diabetes management program and I provide diabetes training programs to various personal care personnel in Northeastern Pennsylvania. I have taken a leadership role in my community serving on the Mid Valley School Board for eight years, 2 term President of the Lackawanna County Pharmacy Association and a 9 year involvement with the Pennsylvania Pharmacy Association culminating as President in 2017. Board Member of POA(Pharmacy Owners Alliance) 2010 to present. Board Member Scranton Chamber of Commerce 2021 to present.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1982- Temple University School of Pharmacy-BS Pharmacy Magna cum laude

2007- Medicap Pharmacy Professional Achievement Award

2010- Lackawanna County Pharmacists Association Pharmacist of the Year Award

2011- Pennsylvania Pharmacy Association George S Maggio Award

2017- NCPA Pharmacy Leadership Award

WORK HISTORY

December 2004 - Current

President, Owner and Pharmacy Manager, Better Health

Pharmacy & Wellness, Olyphant, PA

 Superior Care Pharmacy Inc dba Better Health Pharmacy & Wellness (formally Medicap Pharmacy) opened from scratch in December, 2004. Pharmacy growth was rapid and sustained due to a strong emphasis on excellent customer service and strong Community involvement. Pharmacy purchased building next door expanding operations, size, services, delivery and adding a drive-thru window in 2018. Name was changed to Better Health Pharmacy & Wellness in 2023 to better reflect our core values and services.

January 2003 - January 2004 **Pharmacy Development Manager**, *Rite Aid Corp.*, Northeast Pennsylvania

 Corporate Supervisor of 38 Rite Aid Pharmacies and 90 Pharmacists in Northeast PA

January 1999 - January 2004 **Retail Pharmacy Manager**, *Rite Aid Pharmacies*, Daleville, PA, Olyphant PA

January 1997 - January 1998 **Retail Pharmacy Manager**, *Eckerd Drug*, Moscow, PA

January 1992 - January 1997

Retail Manager of Pharmacy and OTC Sale, Fay's Drug (formerly Stephens Pharmacy), Moscow, PA

January 1982 - January 1992

Manager of Pharmacy and Over the Counter (OTC) Sales,

Stephens Prescription Drug Store, Moscow, PA

AFFILIATIONS

- Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association
- · Lackawanna County Pharmacy Association
- · National Certification Board for Diabetes Educators
- National Community Pharmacists Association
- · America Association of Diabetes Educators
- Lackawanna County Opioid Coalition (RECOVERY COALITION)

FAMILY

- · Debbie Pusey, beautiful wife and mother
- Erica Pusey Bahr, 34, Managing Director at Jeffries, NYC specializing in Healthcare Mergers and Acquisitions, Connecticut
- Bryan Pusey, 31, young man living the dream, works at Giant Markets, has Down Syndrome

Eric Pusey has 42+ years of Retail Community Pharmacy experience and has lived his entire life in the Community Pharmacy arena. Eric's father was a pharmacist, owning his own pharmacy in Olyphant until he passed away in 1982. Eric grew up in the pharmacy. Eric's resume demonstrates his commitment to his professional Pharmacy career, the communities where he lived and worked, and most importantly to his family. Eric began his career in 1982 in a very progressive Independent Pharmacy in Moscow, Pa. The store was sold to a small Chain Drug company, Fay's Drug in 1992, then transitioned to Eckerd Drugs in 1997 then to Rite Aid Pharmacy through 2004. This included a stint as Pharmacy Supervisor of 38 Rite Aid stores and 90 Pharmacists in the northeast region of Pennsylvania. That 1-year corporate experience was enlightening in many ways, good and bad. There was a realization that my passion was not a corporate structure but was working directly with my local patients and their families, helping to improve their health and wellbeing. After being placed in a Rite Aid pharmacy back in my hometown for 2 years, there was another epiphany, it was time to open my own pharmacy in my hometown as my father had done before me.

Medicap Pharmacy was opened from scratch in a small location in Olyphant in 2004. The pharmacy grew rapidly, and became profitable after 3 years, which is a brief period of time for any start up. The Pharmacy and staff excelled at superior customer service. Prescription volume and the services we provided for our patients improved at a rapid pace. The pharmacy at that time was employing ten individuals, 5 full-time and 5 part-time employees. We were able to pay extremely competitive wages, matching 401K benefits and for full-time employees we offered 100% company paid health insurance. We were profitable. Profitability challenges really began as early as 2016. As the pharmacy grew so did the involvement with the Community. Eric was elected and served 2 four-year terms as a Mid Valley School Director, served 2 terms as President of the Lackawanna County Pharmacy Association, Eric did a 7-year stint as board member and eventual President of the Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association, he serves on various Boards and Committees on both national and local levels. The connection with the statements above is that everything we do is for the betterment of the community and the people we serve.

Now for the challenges we face in Retail Community Pharmacy and that does include both Independent and Chain Pharmacies, we are all facing similar challenges and problems. The main burden does, however, affect smaller Independent Pharmacies like my Better Health Pharmacy & Wellness our other witness, Tom Depietro of Depietro's Pharmacy in Dunmore to a much greater degree. There are many reasons for the fiscal challenges that we have incurred but the main culprits are THE BIG BAD PBM's, the Pharmacy Benefits Managers. The Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association has submitted a statement on the PBM's, their abusive practices and the devastating effects on Independent Pharmacies and how this ultimately affects not only the pharmacy owners and our employees but MOST IMPORTANTLY how it negatively affects our patients, your constituents. It puts our most vulnerable and needy patients, the elderly, people with disabilities, inner city and rural patients alike, in very dangerous spots. These practices will be discussed hopefully at length during the hearing being held today, May 15, 2024. The rest of this testimony will be my story.

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Medicap Pharmacy continued its growth and by 2017 had outgrown its location. A used car lot next door became available, it was purchased, of course completely renovated, and added also was a front Drive Thru window. It was a major expenditure that included a \$750,000 mortgage. A bigger building means higher taxes, insurance, utilities, signage etc. We hoped that increased prescription volume would offset the extra costs. We filled substantially more prescriptions in 2018 and 2019. We lost money both years. The question is why? The answer simple but so, so complex, it's the PBM's. One major PBM issue is Federal in nature, which is the DIR fee, (Direct and Indirect Remuneration fee). These fees imposed by the PBM's have increased 107,400 percent between 2010 and 2023 and represent up to a 13% fee on mostly Brand name prescriptions. Prior to 2024, these fees were confiscated by the PBM's 3 or 4 months after the Rx was filled. A good example is the following: A prescription was filled for Ozempic, a wildly popular drug, on December 31, 2023. The true cost of Ozempic to the pharmacy was \$1000. The claim is adjudicated and the PBM says on the receipt that we will be paid \$1035. Hardly a huge profit but at least it is not a negative reimbursement, a \$35 profit. Four months later, now April 2024, the DIR fee is taken back by PBM. What is the fee, \$120 a 12% DIR fee. Instead of a \$35 profit, it's a \$85 LOSS. To make things more "transparent" CMS changed the policy on January 1st, 2024, and now the fees are taken when the claim is adjudicated, so now we can see immediately see that we just lost \$85. This issue is for Congress to fix so enough said on this issue. Sorry, one last point and that is how much in DIR fees did now Better Health Pharmacy pay in 2021-\$197,474, in 2022-\$267,420 and 2023-\$329,200, STAGGERING.

In the 1st year of Covid, 2020, everyone was obviously affected. The Pharmacy lost approximately \$42,000 but state, local and federal grants and PPP program helped us survive. In 2021 our pharmacy conducted multiple Covid vaccines clinics in Civic centers, church basements, school district gymnasiums in Lackawanna, Wayne and Susquehanna counties, hospice centers, high rise senior living apartments, nursing homes and YES, we administered vaccines to many home bound patients. Medicap Pharmacy administered over 30,000 shots. The vaccines were supplied by the government at no cost and eventually the pharmacy received an administration fee, after our expenses such as travel and nurses to administer, we made a small profit that year, we earned it. The problem was that this "windfall" profit masked the fact that most Independent Pharmacies were losing money because of the PBM's horrible reimbursements! I can say that between 4 Independent pharmacies in Lackawanna County, Better Health Pharmacy in Olyphant, Depietro's Pharmacy in Dunmore, Prescription Center in Scranton and now closed Family Pharmacies administered well over 75,000 Covid shots to keep our communities safe and healthy.

Moving forward into 2022, the losses continued, our cash flow was abysmal. It was mentioned above that Family Pharmacies (5 stores actually) closed in 2022. The reason, bad reimbursements from PBM's, bad cash flow, etc. Three of those stores were located within 3 miles of Better Health Pharmacy so our prescription volume went from filling 1400 Rx's per week to 2100 Rx's per week. Our revenue(sales) also increased by almost 50%. Logic states that increase like above would be a good thing, wrong! Many of the 700 prescriptions per week were Brand Name drugs. We lost money, higher overhead costs, and additional employees needed to provide services. In 2022 the store lost \$110,000. I fell behind 2 weeks with my suppliers. I personally "loaned" the business \$45,000 of our savings and having depleted them had the take an additional \$30,000 from an IRA account. Started working on a \$500,000 Covid EIDL loan.

Ein Pusey R.Ph.

Moving into 2023, cash flow was again terrible and reimbursements from PBM's decreased further. Finally, after 6 months and needing the assistance of Congressman Cartwright we got the loan. Paid off our suppliers and thought we were ok. We cut as many expenses as we could but still had to dwindle another \$50,000 from my 401K plan. The estimated loss for 2023 is \$122,000. Unsustainable. We needed working capital to continue the business and we embarked on a TOTAL Business refinance through the SBA. That process started in September 2023. Our closing is scheduled in a week, almost 8 months. In February of this year 2024, again 2 weeks behind to suppliers, my orders for the drugs I needed for patients were being held and NOT delivered. Patients were NOT getting the meds they needed. I had no choice but get an "emergency" \$200,000 loan at 22% interest and like a car loan the interest was added up front, total new debt \$224,000. The WEEKLY payment is \$4600. That loan too is being refinanced. The point is that this pharmacy is hanging on by a thread! But who really suffers if the Pharmacy closes its doors today? Certainly, my family does. Pharmacy brokers who call all the time say the business is worth about \$1,600,000, the problem is that my debt is \$1,750,000. Not good math. All my employees and their families suffer. I will say it again, it is OUR PATIENTS, YOUR CONSTITUENTS who really suffer. What happens when most Community Pharmacies close? It creates pharmacy deserts, yes that is the new buzz word pharmacy deserts. It is happening now, yes in our state, in Pennsylvania, in towns like Olyphant and Dunmore and Scranton and Pittsburgh and Philadelphia and many of the rural areas out in the country.

What can be done at the State level regarding PBM reform, PLENTY. Very briefly, PBM's dictate what our pharmacy is being reimbursed. They hold pharmacies hostage with take or leave it contracts that most often result in Brand Name drugs being paid below our TRUE costs. We receive NO rebates on Brand drugs. I have included in my testimony a report on all Brand Name medications that were sold by Better Health Pharmacy from January 1st, 2024, through April 30th, 2024. The store LOST \$35,740 on these Brands. Unbelievable! PBM's also steer patients to pharmacies in their own limited network or only to their own mail order pharmacy or brick and mortar pharmacy(CVS Caremark, Express Scripts and Optum). We need PBM reform in our state, Pennsylvania, and we need it as quickly as possible. At least twenty-two other states have done some form of PBM reform. House bill 1993 needs not only your support but it needs your ideas. The draft as written, to be frank, is just OK. There needs to be accountability written in the bill. There needs to be enforceability written into the bill. There needs to be a better uniform pricing formula that the PBM's follow. There needs to be transparency in PBM practices. There needs to be something written in the bill that prohibits PBM's from reimbursing Pharmacies BELOW OUR COST on Brand Name drugs. We really need your help and need it now! Thank you.

Sold at a Loss by NDC

Plan Named Group: All # of stores selected: 1 Record Count: 1

Reporting Period: 01/01/2024 to 04/30/2024 Formulation Type: Brand Therapeutic Categories: All

Insurance Type: All

Drug Named Group: All Pickup Status: All

Total Lost % Loss (\$35,740.05) 9.03%

Stor Formulation Type Total Drugs Sold

Sold at a Loss Totals Total :

Rx Quantity Manufacturer
3 6.00
5 10.00
1 2.00
4 8.00
1 1.00
2 80.00
3 36.00
3 45.00
2 60.00
-
24
95 5,202.00
4 240.00
10 210.00
11 330.00
9 540.00
2
-
3 30.00
2
-
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2
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2
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4
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2 16.00
1 20.00
8 240.00
4 120.00
9 270.00
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0.98	0.86	0.38	2.51	6.74	14.20	8.55	6.62	2.67	1.03	2.24	3.48	3.29	4.44	7.39	20.04	6.53	6.74	0.70	20.99	0.70	1.38	3.19	3.93	2.85	2.06	3.32	0.86	98.0	8.55	571.82	3.03	94.74	1.05	98.0	0.85	1.95	14.51	6.75	86.0	1.05	1.38	1.38	583.92	6.74	8.46	1.47	4 19
(08.1%)	(\$1.12)	(\$9.84)	(\$63.73)	(\$16.17)	(\$384.18)	(\$34.02)	(\$3.73)	(\$50.86)	(\$5.48)	(\$34.24)	(\$222.23)	(\$117.22)	(\$40.01)	(\$55.38)	(\$207.45)	(\$25.53)	(\$3.40)	(\$5.33)	(\$466.61)	(\$11.65)	(\$8.01)	(\$82.05)	(\$706.38)	(\$642.29)	(\$31.19)	(\$6.22)	(\$1.59)	(\$13.26)	(\$230.04)	(\$280.88)	(\$130.03)	(\$1,069.62)	(\$22.84)	(\$23.30)	(\$6.63)	(\$3.24)	(\$20.72)	(\$3.51)	(\$19.92)	(\$4.78)	(\$25.00)	(\$19.26)	(\$1,483.98)	(\$54.08)	(\$93.40)	(\$79.15)	(8378 90)
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\$132.73	\$130.73	\$2,588.12	\$2,534.23	\$239.89	\$2,706.44	\$397.81	\$56.38	\$1,901.54	\$531.04	\$1,531.08	\$6,387.92	\$3,562.20	\$901.88	\$749.40	\$1,034.95	\$391.17	\$50.43	\$763.51	\$2,222.89	\$1,659.75	\$582.45	\$2,980.31	\$17,966.21	\$22,560.79	\$1,517.00	\$187.28	\$184.95	\$1,546.14	\$2,690.68	\$49.12	\$4,295.65	\$1,128.98	\$2,175.76	\$2,724.95	\$776.55	\$166.30	\$142.84	\$52.02	\$2,022.60	\$455.38	\$1,815.64	\$1,400.49	\$254.14	\$802.33	\$1,103.90	\$5,397.31	\$0.030.02
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		_	(\$243.86)	(\$35.72	(\$3.93)	(\$64.68)	(\$8.76)	(\$4.34)	(\$12.80)	(\$98.90)		(\$0.20)		(\$3,		(\$15.05)	(\$2.00)	(\$28.84)		(\$2.33)	(\$75.74)			(\$17.88)	(\$40.64)	(\$1,791.18)	(\$1.64)	(\$24.84)	(\$702.75)			(\$83.59)	(\$19.04)	(\$2.52)	(\$2.32)	(\$1.22)	(\$114.45)	(\$12.72)	(\$13.08)	(\$267.79)	(\$12.80)	(\$3.30)	(\$17.50)	(\$33.07)	(\$20.43)	190 001
\$30.16	\$264.58	\$2,941.18	\$3,614.18	\$168.00	\$193.93	\$1,075.20	\$18.24	\$7.15	\$1,510.10	\$1,566.66	\$1,683.22	\$4.94	\$6.46	\$6,945.70	\$1,339.58	\$1,086.00	\$235.06	\$29.08	\$5,462.20	\$1,256.47	\$1,199.64	\$13.80	\$924.50	\$2,107.24	\$2,997.00	\$5,243.26	\$19.98	\$51.96	\$784.60	\$156.92	\$60.00	\$400.00	\$6,334.72	\$19.12	\$170.46	\$44.99	\$1,812.02	\$3,137.40	\$1,540.04	\$7,692.99	\$943.08	\$918.16	\$1,290.69	\$1,617.15	\$323.43	0000
\$8.19	\$246.37	\$2,761.43	\$3,370.32	\$132.28	\$190.00	\$1,010.52	\$9.48	\$2.81	\$1,497.30	\$1,467.76	\$1,676.40	\$4.74	\$5.52	\$3,508.05	\$1,339.57	\$1,070.95	\$233.06	\$30.24	\$5,440.24	\$1,251.14	\$1,123.90	\$10.29	\$866.12	\$2,089.36	\$2,956.36	\$3,452.08	\$18.34	\$27.12	\$81.85	\$150.68	\$56.70	\$316.41	\$6,315.68	\$16.60	\$168.14	\$43.77	\$1,697.57	\$3,124.68	\$1,526.96	\$7,425.20	\$930.28	\$914.86	\$1,273.19	\$1,584.08	\$303.00	0000
\$1.66	\$35.00	\$198.00	\$529.90	\$99.99	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2.29	\$1,497.30	\$21.60	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$128.28	\$0.00	\$1,070.95	\$35.00	\$10.00	\$4.60	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10.29	\$87.00	\$145.00	\$20.00	\$51.90	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5.67	\$22.42	\$3.00	\$16.60	\$20.00	\$0.00	\$700.00	\$0.00	\$70.00	\$249.98	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$225.75	\$4.60	0000
\$6.53	\$211.37	\$2,563.43	\$2,775.21	\$30.18	\$190.00	\$1,010.52	\$9.48	\$0.52	\$0.00	\$1,446.16	\$1,576.40	\$4.74	\$5.52	\$3,379.77	\$1,294.57	\$0.00	\$198.06	\$20.24	\$5,435.64	\$1,251.14	\$1,123.90	\$0.00	\$779.12	\$1,809.36	\$2,669.98	\$3,400.18	\$18.34	\$27.12	\$81.85	\$150.68	\$51.03	\$293.99	\$6,312.68	\$0.00	\$118.14	\$43.77	\$397.57	\$3,124.68	\$1,406.96	\$7,125.20	\$870.28	\$914.86	\$1,273.19	\$1,358.33	\$298.40	0000
\$33.07	\$261.28	\$2,867.48	\$4,388.20	\$168.00	\$237.47	\$1,276.79	\$23.96	\$17.99	\$1,535.68	\$1,779.09	\$2,139.69	\$11.52	\$11.52	\$7,063.40	\$2,679.14	\$1,380.48	\$298.80	\$59.08	\$5,207.58	\$1,597.20	\$1,524.96	\$14.09	\$1,175.20	\$2,535.79	\$3,809.74	\$2,744.47	\$21.00	\$93.50	\$936.85	\$187.37	\$72.00	\$528.00	\$7,491.64	\$29.41	\$216.68	\$53.99	\$2,233.09	\$3,562.79	\$1,853.24	\$9,298.61	\$1,198.81	\$1,167.12	\$1,572.33	\$2,055.65	\$411.13	0,10
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50.00 Nipro Diagnostics, Inc. 3	Medisense	Medisense	Medisense	Medisense	GlaxoSmithKline	GlaxoSmithKline	Method	Method	Purdue Pharma LP	Purdue Pharma LP	Purdue Pharma LP	PureTek Corporation	PureTek Corporation	Otsuka America	Otsuka America	Shire LLC	Hikma Americas, Inc.	Pfizer Laboratories	Actavis Pharma, Inc.	Eisai Inc.	Sunovion	20.00 Reckitt Benckiser LLC	Takeda	Salix	Salix	Salix	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Alkermes, Inc.	Unknown	Noven Therapeutics,	Adapt Pharma Inc	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Avion	Unknown	Unknown	The second secon
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INDE METRIX TES GLUCUSE	FREESTYLE KIT SENSOR	FREESTY LIBR KIT 2 SENSOR	FREESTY LIBR KIT 3 SENSOR	FREESTY LIBR MIS 3 READER	NJ 50/0.5ML	INJ 120MCG	CHW 0.25MG	CHW 0.5MG	TAB 10MG ER	TAB 30MG ER	TAB 80MG ER	CHW 0.25MG	CHW 0.5MG	TAB 0.5MG	TAB 3MG	CAP 70MG	SPR 665-25	CRE 1%	CAP 1.5MG	TAB 10MG	TAB 800MG	TAB 600MG ER	TAB 20MG	TAB 3MG	TAB 150MG	TAB 550MG	MIS LANCETS	MIS LANCETS	TES AVIVA PL	TES SMART	TES GUIDE	TES GUIDE	INJ 380MG	TAB 64MG	DIS 20MG/9HR	SPR 4MG	AER 80MCG	CAP 42MG	TAB 180MG	REPATHA SURE INJ 140MG/ML	TAB 75MG ODT	TAB 75MG	TAB 0.1-20	AER 200-5MCG	AER 100-5MCG	CAL
I KUE ME I KI	FREESTYLE	FREESTY LIB	FREESTY LIBI	FREESTY LIB	SHINGRIX INJ 50/0.5ML	AREXVY IN	MULTI VIT/FL CHW 0.25MG	MULTIVIT/FL CHW 0.5MG	OXYCONTIN	OXYCONTIN	OXYCONTIN	MULTIVIT/FL CHW 0.25MG	MULTIVIT/FL CHW 0.5MG	REXULTI TA	-			SILVADENE		0		MUCINEX			~			FASTCLIX M				¥	7	-	¥		ALVESCO A	_	NEXLETOL T	REPATHA SUR	NURTEC TA	GEMTESA T	BALCOLTRA	DULERA AE	DULERA AE	CAT LABOR TO WIT IN THE
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3.47	460.71	13.06	283.13
(\$2.36)	(\$25.80)	(\$100.64)	(\$1,139.92)
\$70.36	\$31.40	\$870.96	\$1,542.53
\$68.00	\$5.60	\$770.32	\$402.61
\$68.00	\$0.56	\$0.00	\$45.26
\$0.00	\$5.04	\$770.32	\$357.35
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I appreciate the opportunity to address a matter of critical importance that affects all constituents in your community.

My name is Thomas R. DePietro, owner of DePietro's Pharmacy located in Dunmore, Pennsylvania. I earned my Doctor of Pharmacy from Temple University School of Pharmacy in 2009. In 2012, I embarked on the journey of pharmacy entrepreneurship after recognizing the need for enhanced patient care beyond what chain pharmacies offered. I founded DePietro's Pharmacy with a commitment to providing personalized and professional service to our community.

Over the past few years, I've engaged in discussions with numerous elected officials at both state and federal levels concerning the adverse effects of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) on independent community pharmacies and public health.

Today, I urge you to prioritize public health investment by ensuring fair reimbursement for the services rendered by independent pharmacies.

Independent pharmacies play a crucial role in serving your constituents with individualized and expert care. The connection between health outcomes and medication adherence is undeniable. Medications can only be effective when taken as prescribed, yet adherence is often hindered by various barriers. Independent pharmacies address these obstacles by offering essential services such as home delivery and medication organization.

As you know, a main goal for our senior citizen population is to remain in their homes while they age. At DePietro's Pharmacy, it is extremely common that seniors, their family members or social workers turn to us to help them manage their medications so they can remain at home. We organize and sort their medications for the entire month. This service allows many of our customers to remain at home, instead of going into a nursing home. Corporate pharmacies do not offer this type of service.

As witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacists across the Commonwealth played pivotal roles in the continuum of healthcare. This crisis underscored the importance of investing in public health infrastructure.

There are three main categories of insurance contracts: state-funded plans, federally funded plans, and commercially insured plans. Each of these requires immediate attention to prevent further closures of pharmacies. For the purpose of this discussion, I will focus on state-funded plans.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Department of Health Services contracts Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) to administer health and pharmacy benefits. However, the current reimbursement structure inadequately compensates pharmacies for their services. The existing dispensing fees, ranging from 50 to 75 cents per prescription, grossly underestimate the true costs of operation. These fees fail to cover basic business expenses, leading to the closure of many pharmacies.

This contract is the HealthChoices Physical Health. On page 50 of the agreement pharmacy services are addressed in one sentence: "The Managed Care Organization must comply with the Department's covered drug services standards and requirements described in Exhibit BBB, Drug Services."

The Exhibit BBB explicitly states that: The Agreement between the MCO and the State of PA states PH-MCO must develop, implement, and maintain a process that ensures the amount paid to all network pharmacies reflects the pharmacy's acquisition cost, professional services and cost to dispense the prescription to a Medicaid beneficiary. The PH-MCO must submit to the Department the policies and procedures for development of network pharmacy payment methodology including the process to ensure that brand and generic payment rates reflect the pharmacy's acquisition cost (from a readily available distributor doing business in Pennsylvania) and the professional dispensing fee accurately reflects the

pharmacist's professional services and cost to dispense the prescription to a Medicaid beneficiary.

Dispensing fees are separate from the reimbursement for the medication product itself and from care coordination and other pharmacy care services. Dispensing fees take into consideration payroll and the array of other pharmacy department and facility costs — ranging from computer systems, to transaction fees, to utilities and beyond.

The National Cost of Dispensing in 2020 estimated the average cost per prescription at \$12.40, with approximately half of this attributed to payroll expenses alone. It's evident that the current reimbursement rates are unsustainable and threaten the viability of independent pharmacies.

I implore you to take action to rectify this disparity and ensure fair reimbursement for pharmacies, enabling us to continue providing critical services to your constituents.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. DePietro, PharmD

Pharmacist/Owner

DePietro's Pharmacy

Below are some common examples of medications that we dispense to patients who have a Medicaid MCO plan.

DRUG Name	Pharmacy COST	Insurance PAID
BIKTARVY	\$3,861.78	\$3.829.13
Cost to dispense	\$12.40	\$0.50
Patient Copay		\$0.00
Total	\$3,874.18	\$3,829.63
Total LOSS		(\$44.55)

DRUG Name	Pharmacy COST	Insurance PAID
DULERA Inhaler	\$323.26	\$327.02
Cost to dispense	\$12.40	\$0.50
Patient Copay		\$3.00
Total	\$335.66	\$330.02
Total LOSS		(\$5.64)

DRUG Name	Pharmacy COST	Insurance PAID
LISINOPRIL 2.5MG	\$0.53	\$4.17
Cost to dispense	\$12.40	\$0.50
Patient Copay		\$0.00
Total	\$12.93	\$4.67
Total LOSS		(\$8.26)

The Cost of Dispensing a Prescription

Item	Cost
Transaction Charge	\$0.055
Electronic Rx Cost	\$0.17
Pharmacy vial	\$0.31
Pharmacy lid	\$0.18
Prescription Label	\$0.05
Paper Bag	\$0.05
Pharmacist	\$60/hr
Pharmacy Technician (Processes)	\$20/hr
Pharmacy Technician (Counts/Labels)	\$20/hr
Cashier	\$18/hr
Employee Health Insurance	\$9,000 per month
Utility Expenses	Electric \$670.00/month Water \$104/per month
	Gas \$275/per month
Computer Software	\$500/month
Building Expenses	Business Insurance
	Property Insurance
	Real Estate Taxes
	Maintenance
Credit Card Fees	3% of transaction