



May 30, 2024

RE: Proposed Drug Review Commission Will Negatively Impact Rhode Islanders Living with Cancer

To Honorable Speaker Joe Shekarchi and Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly:

Tigerlily Foundation is a national women's health and oncology organization dedicated to education, advocacy, and hands-on support for young women before, during, and after cancer focusing on eradicating the disparities of age, stage and color. I write to you today to express our organization's concerns over [Senate Bill 2719](#) that would establish a Drug Cost Review Commission in Rhode Island, commonly known as a prescription drug affordability board (PDAB) in other states. **Establishing a drug cost review board in Rhode Island will block access to essential medicines that Rhode Islanders rely on to manage symptoms and lead healthier lives, particularly for patients living with cancer and other complex and chronic conditions. A Drug Cost Review Commission will only further exasperate already existing health inequities rather than helping move progress forward towards health equity in Rhode Island.**

Prescription drug price setting policies that often accompany PDABs, such as upper payment limits (UPLs) which are included in the proposed Drug Cost Review Commission, fail to protect access to timely and effective care and can actually increase risks for patients who need consistent access to medications to manage their health. UPLs limit reimbursement for hospitals, doctors, and pharmacists who dispense effective treatments that help patients manage a chronic condition. **As a result of the proposed Drug Cost Review Commission, Rhode Island patients could be forced to search elsewhere to access medications they need and could end up forgoing critical treatments altogether, which can lead to adverse health consequences including death and higher medical costs in the future.** In addition, establishing a Drug Cost Review Commission in Rhode Island could divert critical research resources elsewhere and have a chilling effect on the development of new medicines for patients who have limited or no treatment options today for their condition. Furthermore, should Rhode Island decide to establish a Drug Cost Review Commission, state officials must ensure patients have a seat at the table. This would include patient advocacy organizations as community advisory representatives of the Rhode Island Senate so that we ensure these and future recommendations include all stakeholders.

Triple negative breast cancer (TNBC) is an especially hard-to-treat type of breast cancer that has limited treatment options and is diagnosed in Black and Hispanic women at younger ages and later stages. For patients who are diagnosed with complex cancers like TNBC, timely and equitable access to medications and treatments prescribed by one's physician is critical. However, drug price controls can unintentionally threaten vital pathways for patients to access cutting-edge medicines that can help them survive such illnesses.

Rhode Islander and constituent Kate Wunch speaks on behalf of her community and advocates that "creating barriers to accessing life-saving treatments is extremely detrimental to the wellbeing of Rhode Island patients. We need change that involves incorporating input from patients and includes safeguards to ensure Rhode Islanders have cost-efficient access to any drug they need." Kate is a Tigerlily ANGEL Advocate, Inflammatory Breast Cancer Survivor, mom, and Rhode Islander committed to advocating for change that leads to better outcomes for cancer patients. We stand with Kate and her community.



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While we commend the Rhode Island General Assembly and other elected leaders in Rhode Island for exploring solutions that alleviate health care access and affordability challenges and reduce health disparities, any policy solution must not come at the expense of vulnerable communities in Rhode Island, particularly Black and Brown communities who already face disproportionate barriers. TNBC, among other cancers and chronic conditions, disproportionately affects Black women, and establishing a Drug Cost Review Commission in Rhode Island would have disastrous consequences on access to care, future innovative treatments, and efforts to achieve health equity.

On behalf of the communities that the Tigerlily Foundation serves, we thank you for your leadership in seeking policy solutions to address barriers to care that Rhode Island patients continue to face. However, S. 2719 falls short of that goal. On behalf of our community and as an 18 year survivor of TNBC myself, I thank you for your consideration of our concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at maimah@tigerlilyfoundation.org if Tigerlily Foundation can be a resource to you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Maimah Karmo
Founder & CEO
Tigerlily Foundation