

TESTIMONY

SB26-167: PRESCRIPTION DRUG OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSE CREDIT

2026

Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Leslie Kalechman. I am a retired Medical Social Worker and current AARP CO Advocate; thank you for this opportunity to speak in strong support of SB26-167.

AARP CO is the largest organization in Colorado (about 670,000 members) focusing on health and financial security for Coloradans 50+.

Costs of prescription medications force Americans to make tough choices. KFF has reported that for insured adults under 65, 43% report not taking their medications as prescribed due to costs.

An AARP 2024 Survey of Americans ages 50 and older reports that 30% of respondents have difficulty affording their prescription drugs. The same survey reports that 38% of respondents use Direct-to-Consumer programs, primarily because their prescription drugs are too expensive under their health insurance plan.

Patients who are unable to access their medications have a higher rate of unnecessary, avoidable and often more expensive health outcomes; as well as other negative outcomes such as inability to work.

When I was in my mid-40s I was diagnosed with hypothyroidism which has been successfully treated with 2 generic medications. Had I been unable to afford these, I would not have had the focus or energy to be able to work full-time.

Permitting patients to receive credit towards annual deductibles for out-of-pocket prescription drug expenses is a just policy when insured folks are unable to afford their insurance plan co-pays. People pay health insurance premiums regardless of whether they use the prescription drug plan. If I can find a cheaper option for obtaining medications necessary for my

health and wellbeing, I should be able to do so; and the cost should be accepted towards my deductible.

Sources:

1. American's Challenges with Health Care Costs, Sparks, et al, KFF, 4/16/26

2. Medication Adherence and Characteristics of Patients who spend less on basic needs to afford Medications, Rohatgi, et al; J Am Board Fam Med 2022 May

3. Use of Online Pharmacies and Drug Discount Programs Among US Adults 50 and Older, Teresa A. Keenan, AARP Research, Jan. 2025.