

February 22, 2021

## **Testimony in support of HF801 – Prescription Drug Affordability Board**

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

In 2014, I was diagnosed with Bipolar II. This mental illness is characterized by cyclical mood changes. Treatment often requires a mood stabilizer drug and one or more antidepressants, anti-psychotics, or anti-anxiety drugs. A patient often has to try multiple drugs to find which works best, and there's no pharmacy refund for those that don't. The cost racks up quick.

There's also a mental and emotional cost. When drugs haven't worked for me AND they're expensive, I have wanted to give up. I have wanted to try to "handle it myself." My first mood stabilizer cost \$235 out of pocket AND almost killed me with an allergic reaction. I was too scared of the cost to seek treatment for a year.

In 2015 I tried again and got lucky with the cheapest mood stabilizer, lithium. I experienced real gains in my life because of treatment. In fall of 2016 I noticed I was increasingly struggling with depression, so my psychiatrist added Abilify. I was still on my parents' insurance due to the Affordable Care Act, and their deductible had been met. I didn't have to pay anything when I filled my prescription for three months. I felt hope again.

When the pharmacist told me in January that the deductible had reset and I would have to pay over \$700 each month. My hope shattered. I knew I was struggling. I knew I needed medical treatment. But I couldn't afford it so I would have to go without. When people with bipolar are not receiving treatment, our lives can fall apart. Mine did, but I still didn't seek treatment because I couldn't afford it.

I qualify for Medical Assistance now and I'm in a master's program to become a therapist. I'm going to do my job of supporting my patients, but I need you to do yours: Please vote to pass a Prescription Drug Affordability Board to make it possible for people to afford treatment. Stop letting pharmaceutical companies charge Americans prices no other developed country allows. I know it's possible because you make my medication affordable on Medical Assistance. Without laws in place, pharmaceutical companies are picking and choosing who lives and dies. Give everyone the same chance to thrive. I urge you to vote yes on H.F. 801.

Glenn Nuckols, Minneapolis, Minnesota