

Testimony to support H.B. 5384
Insurance and Real Estate Committee
March 6th, 2018
Robin Comey

My name is Robin Comey, and my husband and I have been a part of the “gig economy” for over 25 years. We are self-employed and are part of a group of 34% of Americans that enjoy this work-life balance. I have several part time jobs, own our own small family business and have been self-insured 100% of the time over the past 25 years. Our family of four has had a variety of high deductible health insurance plans and always end up with paying out of pocket for prescriptions.

Our 11-year-old was diagnosed with asthma and life threatening food allergies before he reached his second birthday. One of the monthly asthma inhalers is \$385. Typically, winters would be a good time for him to use a twice daily inhaler routine. But we simply couldn't afford it to have it filled since last Sept. We even tried asking our Dr.'s for samples and scoured the internet for coupons - and there was no cost relief available. So we held off for 6 months before we filled the prescription – six months during the height of cold and flu season. The breaking point was just this past weekend when, for the second weekend in a row, he experienced a flare up. He and I spent several hours awake waiting for him to begin breathing better and wondering if this was going to result in a trip to the Emergency Room. Very scary for us.

In my son's short time alive, we also have seen a huge increase in the cost of the other life saving medicine he is prescribe – epinephrine. We need three sets (of two) and we never leave home without it. Whether he is at home, school, on his way to school, or at a family members house he has to carry it with him at all times. And they expire within a year usually, so all three sets need to be replaced yearly, even if not used. If he doesn't have access to it, and goes into anaphylaxis he could die.

So yes, the high cost of these life-saving medicines is a burden on our family and the other families in our situation. Both of these medicines are over 40 years old and the cost is significantly more in the US than other country. Our family feels taken advantage of. I have spent years advocating for my child with life threatening diseases in school and elsewhere, but we have a long way to go before we feel we have the equal rights and access to health care, if these medicines still remain unaffordable. The high prices are restrictive for us and millions of families like us. I support this piece of legislation, HB 5384, which we hope will provide more transparency and accountability so that my son is safe and has the same rights and access to healthcare as everyone. Having these life saving devices shouldn't be a choice my family has to make. Thank you