

Ways and Means Testimony

Thank you.

I want to begin by speaking about an issue that is top-of-mind for so many Kansans: the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs.

I've heard from so many people in my district ... whether that was during our town hall ... prescription drug roundtable or simply from people calling our office ... who are struggling to pay for the prescription drugs that they or their loved ones depend on to survive.

One of the panelists on our roundtable was a mother who worries about the cost of insulin for her daughter.

No family in this country should have to choose between putting food on the table and paying for life-saving medication.

And when we talk about the cost of prescription drugs ... we hear many justifications from industry players for these high prices ... but I don't hear them talking about *solutions*.

One of the justifications is that they pay for pharmaceutical companies' research and development efforts to create these medications.

But the technology and science behind insulin injections to treat diabetes ... for example ... has been around for decades. Why are these costs still rising?

In all my conversations with constituents and providers about the high cost of prescription drugs ... one thing has become clear ... the system is complicated and lacks oversight.

If we are going to improve the system ... and help our families succeed ... we must increase transparency.

That's why I co-sponsored the Prescription Drug Price Transparency Act, introduced by Representative Doug Collins.

This bipartisan bill ... which has been referred to your committee ... creates transparency requirements for pharmacy benefit managers - or PBMs.

As members of this committee know ... PBMs act as the middle agent in negotiations between pharmaceutical companies and insurance plans.

PBMs negotiate drug prices from pharmaceutical manufacturers ... and they *claim* that they pass the negotiated savings on to the insurance plan and to the patients.

But PBMs operate with few transparency requirements ... and we don't know exactly how much of these negotiated rebates

they give back to plans and patients ... and how much they keep for themselves.

The Prescription Drug Price Transparency Act would increase transparency requirements and oversight for PBMs ... helping to ensure that consumers understand what they are paying for.

I urge this committee to consider this legislation as it continues to work on lowering the costs of prescription drugs.

I would also ask that the committee maintain steadfast support for the small business community.

I proudly serve on the Small Business Committee ... so I have the pleasure of meeting with small business owners who simply want predictability from the tax code ... like WATCO, a local short line railroad in my district.

Provisions like the extension of the 45G railroad track maintenance tax credit and the New Markets Tax Credit Extension Act help small businesses like WATCO plan with certainty ... so they can grow.

Please keep in mind the perspective of these owners and their employees so small business can remain the engine of our economy.

This committee also has the opportunity ... and responsibility ... to alleviate the crushing burden of student loan debt faced by so many people in this country.

The Student Loan Repayment Assistance Act is just one example of legislation that has been referred to your committee that will help address this burden.

This act provides a tax incentive for employers that participate in a student loan repayment program for their employees.

This common-sense reform can address one of the largest looming threats to the financial health of our country.

Lastly ... I simply ask that you keep issues of equity and equality top-of-mind when discussing any potential tax reform.

It's easy to forget ... but the decisions you make here can have far-reaching effects ... and sometimes they can be unintended.

Communities of color have traditionally been marginalized by the fiscal policy of this country ... and our middle class is still struggling to get the relief it needs.

I ask you all to be champions for *everyone* this committee reaches.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you all. Thank you.