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**Statement by Lora Pellegrini, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans, on
Pharmacy Legislation
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Prescription drug spending continues to be one of the fastest growing categories of health care spending in the Commonwealth, threatening the state's health care cost growth benchmark and challenging employers and consumers in the form of higher premiums and copayments.

For these reasons, MAHP supports legislation that seeks greater transparency in the prices charged for prescription drugs, and that give policymakers the necessary tools to examine the role increases in pharmaceutical pricing play in meeting the statewide cost benchmark. Health plans, physicians, and hospitals are being held accountable to keeping their costs in line with the state's cost benchmark. Similar accountability is needed for drug manufacturers. We support legislation that requires pharmaceutical manufacturers to explain the reasons for price increases and to participate in the state's annual cost trends hearings, just as health plans, hospitals and physicians do.

The exorbitant cost of prescription medications creates a barrier for patients to receive the treatments they need and we support legislation that would establish a prescription drug cost assistance trust fund that would be funded by an assessment on drug manufacturers. However, we oppose legislation that seeks to eliminate prescription drug copays or deductibles and prohibit prior authorization for testing of diseases. Cost-sharing mechanisms are essential to help control health care costs, engage individuals in their health care choices, and keep monthly premiums at a minimum.

Health plan tools like step therapy provide value to ensure safety and combat high drug prices. These programs are implemented to ensure quality, protect patients from harm, and control costs. Step therapy allows patients to receive best clinical outcomes with a lower cost option and is only used for a limited number of conditions. MAHP supports legislation that includes a transitional period to promote continuity of care and avoid interruptions in drug therapy. We look forward to working with the legislature to ensure the bills include a clear definition of step therapy protocols so that patients can continue to access their medication without interruption or delay in treatment.

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