



HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

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New Survey Shows Strong Support for Legislation that Provides Transparency and Accountability to Reduce Prescription Drug Costs

A survey conducted by PerryUndem, a national non-partisan research firm, shows Massachusetts voters support proposed legislation to set payment limits to lower prescription drug costs.¹ Voters supported provisions on both transparency and accountability in drug pricing because they are worried about rising costs.

The vast majority of voters in the survey want policymakers to take action and make prescription drugs more affordable. After learning about a new bill being considered by the state legislature (H.1133/S.706), almost 9 in 10 Massachusetts voters say they support the bill becoming law and want their elected officials to support it as well.

The reason for voter support is concern about the rising costs of prescription drugs. This survey, along with another recent [survey](#) sponsored by WBUR, paints a picture of Massachusetts voters worried about the cost of prescription drugs and their ability to afford them in the future. Both surveys also find that about a quarter of those surveyed are either going without prescriptions their doctors prescribed or taking less of a medication because of costs.

The following are six key findings from the survey:

Support for comprehensive legislation to address prescription drug costs

1. **Nearly 9 in 10 Massachusetts voters support a new bill (H.1133/S.706) that would take steps to reduce prescription drug costs, as well as increase price transparency.** Survey respondents were first asked their views on specific provisions of the bill, each of which received high levels of support.

¹ This is a statewide 10-minute telephone survey of 833 registered voters in Massachusetts (45.5% landline, 54.5% cell phone). The survey was conducted June 14-23, 2019. The margin of sampling error on the total results: +/-3.4 percentage points.

Here is what voters heard:

“Right now, there is a bill in the Massachusetts State House that would increase transparency and accountability for pharmaceutical companies so that they have to show how they decide what to charge for prescription drugs. The bill would also make it possible to set payment limits to lower the cost of the most expensive drugs or drugs like insulin that have seen big cost increases recently.

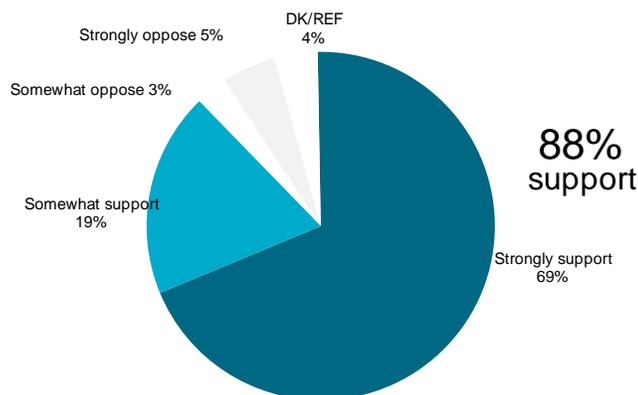
Here are some parts of the bill. For each let me know if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose this part of the bill.”

	Support	Oppose
- Strengthen the ability of MassHealth – the state’s Medicaid program – to negotiate lower drug prices.	91%	6%
- Make pharmaceutical companies show the underlying costs that go into producing prescription drugs, like the research and development.	89%	8%
- Require pharmacists to inform people if purchasing a drug at the retail price would be cheaper than using their insurance. Pharmacists <u>are not</u> required to tell people now.	89%	9%
- Give an independent state agency the authority to use data from manufacturers to potentially set payment limits for unreasonably high-priced drugs to make them more affordable.	87%	10%

Support for each of these provisions spans political party affiliation. For example, 93 percent of Democrats, 86 percent of Independents, and 83 percent of Republicans support giving an independent agency in the state authority to set payment limits for unreasonably high-priced drugs. Taking steps to reduce drug costs and increasing transparency are not seen as partisan efforts by the vast majority of Massachusetts voters.

After hearing the specific provisions, 88 percent of Massachusetts voters say they support the bill as a whole. [See Figure 1] Once again, there is strong support across political party (Democrats 93%, Independents 90%, Republicans 85%).

FIGURE 1: Now that you know more, do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose this bill becoming law?



2. **Massachusetts voters feel transparency isn't enough. They want a bill that both increases transparency AND sets payment limits to reduce the costs of some drugs.** Specifically, 82 percent of voters support a bill that both increases transparency and sets payment limits to bring down their costs compared to just 12 percent who would support a bill that only increases transparency to show the costs that go into producing drugs.
3. **Lawmakers' positions on this legislation matter to voters.** Six in 10 (59%) say they are *more* likely to support their state legislator in the next election if they supported the bill, while 68 percent are *less* likely to support them if they opposed it. In addition, 87 percent are less likely to support them if they took money from drug companies and opposed the bill.

Concern about prescription drug costs

4. **Massachusetts voters are concerned about rising drug costs.** In fact, 82 percent say they are concerned about their ability to afford prescription drugs if prices were to rise, and almost two-thirds (62%) say they are already worried about current costs.
5. **More than one-third say they or a family member hasn't been taking medications as prescribed due to high prices.** As many as 36 percent of Massachusetts voters say they or a family member has done one of the following in the last two years:
 - taken less of a prescription medication, skipped a dose, or cut pills in half (23%);
 - been unable to fill a prescription because of cost (22%);
 - cut back on spending on other necessities such as groceries because of prescription drug costs (18%); and
 - shared prescription medications with someone else because of cost (8%).
6. **Voters believe the main reason for high drug prices is that drug manufacturers want to make as much money as possible.** Three-quarters (76%) think this desire for profit contributes a "great deal" to the cost of prescription drugs, which is twice as many as those who say research and development for new drugs contributes a great deal to the costs (39%). In addition, 86 percent think drug companies aren't doing enough to make prescription drugs more affordable, 79 percent think drug companies make too much profit, and 68 percent think they spend too much on advertising.

Conclusions

The survey, which was sponsored by Health Care For All, shows overwhelming support for legislation that includes both transparency and accountability provisions to reduce prescription drug costs. It is a rare occurrence to find consensus for political action. However, in the case of

H.1133/S.706, 9 in 10 voters support this bill and express that this support would impact future voting choices.

The poll suggests that strong support for the bill is due to widespread concerns about the cost of prescription drugs. While they see only gridlock on the national level, voters increasingly are looking to their state governments for relief from high prescription drug costs. Voters are worried about rising drug prices and what they mean for their future access to medications they may need. Already many voters are not taking medications as prescribed by their doctors because of high costs. This is putting the health and safety of Massachusetts residents at risk.

The poll also suggests there may be political consequences for inaction on this issue. A large majority of voters say they are less likely to vote for their state legislators if they oppose this bill (particularly if they accept funding from the pharmaceutical companies).

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