



MCHI Statement for the Record:

House Committee on Oversight and Reform
Unsustainable Drug Prices (Part III): Testimony from AbbVie CEO Richard Gonzalez
May 18, 2021

The Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative (MCHI) appreciates the opportunity to submit the following statement for the record. MCHI is a Maryland based advocacy organization working to ensure all Marylanders have access to affordable, quality health care—including prescription drugs.

For years it has been clear that our country has a problem with prescription drug prices. As Americans are forced to choose between the medicine they need and other necessities like rent and groceries, Big Pharma continues to make staggering [profits](#). Even at the height of a global pandemic that has threatened the health and financial stability of our nation's residents, drug corporations [raised prices](#) on hundreds of prescription drugs both this year and last.

The industry has long claimed that these skyrocketing prices are reflective of the cost of innovation. In reality, drug corporations spend [more on advertising](#) than on research and the major [driver of drug spending](#) is manufacturer price increases, not innovation. Humira, AbbVie's blockbuster medication that remains the [top selling drug](#) in the world is reflective of the industry's prioritization of profits over patients. AbbVie has increased the price of Humira year over year while simultaneously engaging in evergreening, despite a lack of supporting clinical evidence. As a result, Humira is surrounded by a wall of duplicative patenting, effectively preventing competition and stalling any relief to patients who struggle to afford the drug.

AbbVie's abuse of the patent system and resultant exorbitant pricing have real-world impacts on Maryland patients, insurance premiums, and public programs alike. In a series of state-wide forums, MCHI heard from Marylanders from around the state who struggle with the high cost of prescription drugs—including drugs manufactured by AbbVie. We were reminded time and time again that drugs don't work if people can't afford them. Additionally, Harford County Executive Barry Glassman [testified at a 2019 bill hearing](#) to create Maryland's Prescription Drug Affordability Board that in 2017 the county's single biggest prescription drug expenditure was on Humira—just 72 prescriptions cost the county over \$680,000. Facing tight budgets, high drug prices directly threaten local governments' ability to provide other critical services to residents. We are all hurt by the high cost of prescription drugs.

While states have begun to enact legislation to address prescription drug costs, patent thickets and additional non-competitive practices must be addressed comprehensively at the federal level. Importantly, Americans overwhelmingly support actions to lower prescription drug costs. We applaud Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney and members of the Committee on Oversight and Reform for their work to hold drug corporations accountable. Having worked with the late Chairman Elijah E. Cummings on both Maryland-specific and federal level action to address prescription drug costs, we are pleased to see the continuation of efforts to ensure all Americans can afford the medicine they need and look forward to offering our support.