Chair Cummings, Ranking Member Jordan, members of the committee — thank you for inviting me to share my story.

My name is Pamela Holt, and I am from Granger, Indiana.

At the age of 40, I was widowed when my husband died from a heart attack, so I raised three children on my own. I was fortunate to be a teacher and administrator with good benefits that set me up to have a good retirement.

That all changed, however, when I was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma 3 years ago.

Multiple Myeloma is an incurable but treatable blood cancer. Upon my diagnosis, I underwent a bone marrow transplant and chemotherapy. I am lucky to be in remission today.

However, to keep my cancer at bay, I must take the drug Revlimid. Initially, this treatment plan felt good — I would get to live longer, help raise my grandchildren, and spend summers at our favorite lake in Wisconsin. And I am deeply grateful for that time. But when I learned the cost of Revlimid — I was horrified.

The price of Revlimid is over $250,000 per year.

Last year in January on Medicare Part D, I went in and out of the donut hole — paying $4,950 the first month and then more than $8,000 out of pocket over the rest of the year. That cost was unaffordable for me. And after just one year, it sent me into debt. I was entirely underwater, and I made the heartbreaking decision to refinance my house.

It was 3 years from being paid off entirely. Now I have to start all over.

In the last year, I have been fortunate to receive a grant for the cost of my Revlimid, but this type of assistance can always fall through. I should not have to depend on grants to afford a medication I need to survive.

I spent my life doing all the right things — contributing to my community, teaching in public schools, raising my children — it is unfair that despite my hard work and careful planning, I must face financial challenges because of cancer I have no control over.

I am grateful for the additional time Revlimid has given me with my family. But having cancer is hard enough, I shouldn't have to lose my savings to stay alive.

I am encouraged by the action Congress is starting to take in the hearings over the last couple of months, and I am particularly grateful to this committee for listening to patients.

But what patients need most is a real change to the system and Congressional action that will bring down drug prices.

For me, one solution would be the CREATES Act.

CREATES addresses a tactic the company that makes Revlimid, Celgene, uses to deny generic companies access to samples of Revlimid. This prevents generic competitors from coming to market and allows Celgene to set the price of Revlimid high.[1]

I came to DC last year to encourage Congress to pass this importation piece of legislation — I am grateful that the bill has passed the House Energy & Commerce[2] and Judiciary Committees.[3] I hope it gets over the finish line as soon as possible.

I am also hopeful the members of this committee will sign on to additional legislation to stop drug companies like Celgene from playing games with patents and patients' lives.

For myself and patients across the country, Congressional reform would be life-changing.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story. I look forward to the action you will take on drug prices for myself and other patients across the US.

---

[1] https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/965/text

[2] https://energycommerce.house.gov/newsroom/press-releases/ec-chairman-pallone-on-passage-of-12-bills-to-lower-health-care-and

[3] https://judiciary.house.gov/news/press-releases/house-judiciary-unanimously-passes-bipartisan-bills-lower-prescription-drug