

## **AIN | Sa'Ra Skipper Testimony**

Good morning Chairman Cummings, Ranking Member Jordan, and Members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. My name is Sa'Ra Skipper, a member of Affordable Insulin NOW and T1International. Thank you so much for inviting me to come to speak with you today, and for taking the time to listen to just some of the ways pharmaceutical companies are putting corporate profits above the lives of people like me.

As a resident of Indianapolis, Indiana, I live in the shadow of Eli Lilly's national headquarters—and my life has been at the whim of the company since I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes when I was 5 years old. Since then, Eli Lilly's refusal to control the cost of the drug I depend on has wreaked heartbreak and havoc on my life, my sisters, and those who care about us.

I don't remember my life without this burdensome disease. Being diagnosed at such a young age, I had to grow up fast. I had to appreciate life very early on because if my dose was miscalculated by one unit it would cost me my life.

I can remember being in the hospital multiple times a week, nurses secretly spying on my mom to make sure she wasn't eating my food because my blood sugar would drop so fast—but in actuality, my body was rejecting the insulin.

I can remember showing teachers scars on my finger tips from checking my blood sugar levels because they didn't believe I was a diabetic when I'd complain about not feeling well.

Having such a huge responsibility at such a tender age makes me feel robbed of my childhood.

Being the middle child, I try to stay in my lane as a little sister (even though my brother may not feel the same). And I take my duty as a big sister very seriously. When my baby sister, Shelby was diagnosed with T1D at the age of 7, the bar for setting a good example was set 1000 times higher. I remember seeing my sister and mother weeping. I recall talking to Shelby in the bathroom of the doctor's office and trying to comfort her and tell her it would be ok. Shelby and I have a fear of going through the same challenges as our Aunt Joy, our mother's sister that passed away at 47 from complications of Type 1 Diabetes.

My sister and I have been fighting for our lives since we were children and it has not been easy. It hurts to know that some T1Ds travel to Mexico or Canada for insulin or even buy insulin off of the black market. The fact that 4 people under the age of 30 died last month due to rationing and not being able to afford their insulin is gut-wrenching.

According to a survey done by T1international 1 in 4 people ration their insulin. This is unacceptable. This is why the movement to make insulin affordable for all is so important.

During my freshman and sophomore year of college, I had to ration my insulin. For reasons to this day I still don't understand I was denied Medicaid, and I aged out of my pediatric endocrinologist. The last prescription I received from my doctor came with a note saying "I'm sorry, but this is the last prescription I can fill for you." My professors knew my predicament and yet some could care less and didn't care to help me in class since I spent a majority of it in the bathroom or asleep. I survived by eating less food so that I could take less insulin to make my vial stretch.

This is the fear that I had to live with throughout my education. This is the reality that so many people with diabetes face every single day.

Let's shift gears, it's May 2018. I'm working full-time for a big corporation with benefits—but even with insurance, my 30 day supply of insulin was \$1000.

That's just insulin, that price does not include test strips, needles, and other vital supplies. I couldn't afford to purchase my full supply of insulin, so my sister risked her life by sharing her own dosage.

One night, I take my night time dose of insulin and leave the vial on the dresser for my sister to see. I assumed that she would think that I had already taken my dose since I left the vial on the dresser, but she didn't. She thought that I still needed to take my insulin for the evening, so she took less than her normal dose to ensure that there was enough left for me to take. She put herself at risk.

The next day she went into diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) and had to be hospitalized for 4 days. The veins blew in her body so she had to have a PIC line in her neck and almost went into a diabetic coma.

I couldn't afford my insulin because Eli Lilly refuses to control the cost of insulin. It almost cost my sister her life.

Price gouging is killing people, these pharmaceutical companies are committing murder and getting away with it.

You all as leaders have some say so in making a change, and while young people continue to die from rationing you are just as responsible as the people profiting off of their lives.

Change for this issue will not be a sprint, the marathon continues and patient advocates like me will not stop speaking out until you find a way to put an end to the insulin price crisis in America.

No matter how long it takes, we will keep building our numbers and demanding change because our lives depend on it.