



# House moderates signal concern with Pelosi drug pricing bill

BY PETER SULLIVAN - 05/12/21 01:02 PM EDT

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A group of 10 moderate House Democrats is signaling concerns with Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) signature legislation to lower prescription drug prices, raising further doubts about the legislation's path forward.

Their letter to Pelosi calls for a drug pricing measure to be bipartisan and to "preserve our invaluable innovation ecosystem," pointing to concerns that a bill could hurt drug companies' ability to develop new drugs.

"We must garner bipartisan, bicameral support, with buy-in from a majority of Americans and stakeholders in the public and private sectors," states the letter, sent earlier this month and obtained by The Hill. "If this pandemic has taught us anything, it's that we all, truly, must be in this together."

Pelosi's H.R. 3 legislation, which would allow the secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate lower drug prices and cap prices based on prices paid in other countries, received only two Republican votes when it passed the House in 2019, and is fiercely opposed by the pharmaceutical industry.

The letter, which was [first reported by Stat](#), was led by Reps. Scott Peters (D-Calif.) and Jake Auchincloss (D-Mass.).

Matt Corridoni, an Auchincloss spokesman, even more explicitly raised concerns with H.R. 3.

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“Jake does not think HR3 does enough for patients,” he said in a statement. “It doesn’t materially lower their out of pocket costs and it prevents cures they need. This letter is starting a conversation about improving drug pricing reform.”

He pointed to alternatives like stopping patent abuse and encouraging “public-private collaboration.”

Pelosi has made the drug pricing measure a priority, but its path was already unclear. President Biden left the measure out of his American Families Plan, despite pressure from many congressional Democrats, though in his address to lawmakers last month he did call for Congress to pass drug pricing legislation this year.

Democrats could add drug pricing back into the families plan as it makes its way through Congress, and progressives like Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.) are pushing for it.

But H.R. 3 also could be too strong to get through the Senate, where Democrats hold only 50 seats.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) has said changes could be needed, though he stressed the importance of having some form of negotiation for lower prices.

In response to the moderates’ letter, Pelosi spokesman Henry Connelly said: “Polling shows strong action to lower outrageous prescription drug prices and stop Big Pharma from charging Americans three times or more than what they charge for the same medicines overseas is overwhelmingly supported by Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike.”

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He said the House would pass the measure again, though did not specify a vehicle.

“That’s why House Democrats unanimously voted to pass HR3 last Congress to protect genuine innovation into new cures while stopping Big Pharma from charging Americans outrageous prices on medicines that were discovered decades ago,” he added. “Lowering drug prices is a pillar

of House Democrats' For The People agenda, and we will pass HR3 again this Congress."

Other Democrats signing the letter are Reps. Kurt Schrader (Ore.), Kathleen Rice (N.Y.), Stephanie Murphy (Fla.), Lou Correa (Calif.), Marilyn Strickland (Wash.), Frank Mrvan (Ind.), Josh Gottheimer (N.J.) and Tony Cárdenas (Calif.).

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