

Memorandum in Support

RI H 5302

March 5, 2025

Representative Susan R. Donovan

AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE POLICIES

Dear Chairwoman Donovan,

On behalf of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), we submit this Memo in Support of the above-mentioned bill. AAFA is the leading patient organization for people with asthma and allergies, and the oldest asthma and allergy patient organization in the world. AAFA is dedicated to saving lives and reducing the burden of disease for people with asthma and allergies through support, advocacy, education, and research.

Asthma is a serious, chronic lung disease that affects thousands of Rhode Islanders. There is no cure for asthma, but many people can live normal lives if their asthma is properly managed and controlled. Asthma is one of the most prevalent diseases in the United States, affecting some 27 million Americans and killing more than 10 every day. It is also very expensive, exacting a toll of more than \$80 billion on the U.S. economy each year. According to our [2024 Asthma Capitals Report](#), Providence, Rhode Island ranked as the tenth most challenging city to live with asthma.¹ This data is based on estimated asthma prevalence, emergency department visits due to asthma, and asthma-related fatalities.

AAFA believes that people with asthma need access to affordable medications and devices. Currently, people with asthma can face large financial barriers to drugs that hinder optimal treatment. For example, as detailed in AAFA's [My Life with Asthma](#) report, in a national survey regarding adult asthma, less than a quarter of respondents

¹ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. (2024). *Asthma capitals report 2024: The most challenging places to live with asthma*. <https://aafa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/aafa-2024-asthma-capitals-report.pdf>



always used their asthma treatments as prescribed.² The top three reported reasons for not using treatments were related to cost: inability to afford treatment, treatment was too expensive, and lack of insurance coverage for the treatment. High out-of-pocket costs hinder adherence, threaten the health of patients, and exacerbate disparities in health status.

In addition, because of the complex web of factors affecting drug pricing, coverage, and access, patients can face unpredictable costs for essential medications like inhalers. Negotiated pricing structures, manufacturer decisions, insurance formularies, and pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) policies all shape whether patients can access affordable asthma treatments. By capping inhaler and equipment costs, H 5302 takes a crucial step in ensuring that Rhode Islanders with asthma can better manage their condition. AAFA supports policies that ensure that affordable asthma medications are available to as many people as necessary to improve health outcomes and reduce unnecessary healthcare expenditures.

We appreciate your commitment to improving the lives of those affected by asthma in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Mendez
President and Chief Executive Officer
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

CC: Representative Morales

² Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, "My Life With Asthma: Survey Overview (2017). Available at <https://aafa.org/asthma-allergy-research/our-research/my-life-with-asthma-report/>