

TESTIMONY

**In Support of:
H.2151 Relative to Prescription Assistance Programs
Joint Committee on Public Health
November 10, 2009
Christopher R. Anderson, President**

Thank you, Chairwoman Fargo and Chairman Sanchez for the opportunity this morning to speak in support of this proposal.

The Massachusetts High Technology Council was formed in 1977 by high tech CEOs whose mission was to help make Massachusetts the most competitive state in which to create, operate, and expand high tech businesses. That remains our mission today. Council members employ hundreds of thousands of skilled workers in all of Massachusetts's key technology sectors, including computer hardware, life sciences, software, medical products, defense technology, semiconductor, and telecommunications. Our board includes the executive leadership of tech employers such as Thermo Fisher, Dynamics Research, Vertex, and Analog Devices.

I am also speaking in my role as founding member and member of the Board of the New England Biotech Association, which has also submitted testimony in support of this legislation.

Massachusetts enjoys a number of positive and negative national distinctions, including:

- Best statewide public education system—though we have too many pockets of poor performance and a growing achievement gap;
- Arguably the most comprehensive 10-year Life Science Initiative to support the research and discovery of life-saving medicines here in Massachusetts;
- One of the most onerous gift ban rules governing pharma-physician contact;
- The only state that blocks access to a nationwide program that lowers the cost of brand-name prescription drugs to consumers.

H.2151 would allow thousands of Massachusetts consumers and patients access to financial assistance with the cost of their brand-name prescription medicines. The sustained economic downturn has only highlighted this unusual anti-consumer policy in Massachusetts. With healthcare insurance premiums increasing at double-digit rates, individuals across the state are feeling the squeeze.

Technology employers have been responding to the economic challenge in many ways. Adjusting employee benefits are among them. Compensation, retirement contributions, and

health benefit adjustments are all in the mix, with employees in many instances shouldering more of the costs associated with these benefits in an effort to help retain jobs in Massachusetts.

While many workers across the state are paying more, the prescription assistance H2151 would allow is offered directly by the drug manufacturer to the consumer/patient whose physician has prescribed it, and whose insurance carrier has already approved it, and for which there is no generic alternative. These programs in no way limit the insurer's ability to deny prescriptions for products they do not feel are appropriate. Insurers are able to use formularies to ensure that only the best product for any particular patient is what they are prescribed. These discounts come at the very end of this process after all insurance policies are complied with and the prescription is being filled at the pharmacy.

It is important to note that there is not a state budget impact associated with this program. These programs assure that 100 percent of the benefit accrues to the consumer not the prescriber or the insurance carrier.

The impact of this direct assistance should not be underestimated. In 49 states, it helps consumers remain on and renew their prescriptions. Fifty percent of consumers nationally fail to renew their prescriptions in part due to the cost of deductibles and co-payments which in some cases can be hundreds of dollars or more per month.

As legislators focused on continuing to articulate state economic, education, and healthcare policies designed to accelerate the discovery of life-saving medicines in Massachusetts, please compliment those efforts by helping Massachusetts consumers afford those very same medicines. End our status as the only state in the nation that does not participate in these prescription assistance programs.

Thank you.