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INSIGHTS

# Senate HELP Hearing on Making Health Care Affordable

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On July 31, 2025, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension (HELP) Committee [held](#) a hearing titled making health care affordable to lower costs and empower patients. Members of the committee heard testimony regarding the impact of health care costs on patient care. There was bipartisan agreement that the cost of health care is too high and there must be a solution to lower the costs.

## OPENING STATEMENTS

- [Chairman Bill Cassidy \(R-LA\)](#)

## WITNESS TESTIMONY

- Ms. Chris Deacon, Principal and Founder at VerSan Consulting – [Testimony](#)
- Dr. Benedic Ippolito, Senior Fellow at American Enterprise Institute – [Testimony](#)
- Dr. Brian Miller, Associate Professor of Medicine, Practicing Hospital Medicine Physician – [Testimony](#)
- Mr. Wendell Potter, Center for Health and Democracy – [Testimony](#)
- Dr. Adam Gaffney, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School – [Testimony](#)

## MEMBER DISCUSSION

### Health Care Transparency

Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) opened the discussion by asking how price transparency could reduce the cost of care. Ms. Deacon explained that while employers pay premiums on behalf of employees, they often lack the ability to control hospital costs. Transparency would allow insurers and patients to compare prices, identify the best deals, and better understand what is being paid for.

Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-CO) highlighted the importance of maintaining broad health coverage, noting that Medicare and Medicaid remain major revenue sources for providers. He characterized transparency as a central issue and inquired whether future legislation could expand it. Ms. Deacon expressed strong support, emphasizing that giving patients access to clear “price tags” could be transformative.

Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS) further advocated for the concept, referencing his bipartisan [Patients Deserve Price Tag Act](#) with Sen. Hickenlooper, and asked how greater transparency could influence consumer

decisions and overall health care costs. Ms. Deacon responded that patients would evaluate both cost and value when making choices. She added that if all members had access to this information, it would drive down costs and potentially lower insurance premiums.

Other witnesses echoed support for greater transparency. Dr. Miller stated that withholding price information is unethical, and Dr. Ippolito agreed that transparency would assist in making informed decisions. Mr. Potter added that transparency would be broadly helpful, while Dr. Gaffney cautioned that transparency alone would not prevent some individuals from becoming uninsured.

## **PBM Reform**

Sen. Marshall raised concerns about pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), referencing his bill to delink PBM's and noting that PBMs often create formularies that can prevent patients from accessing generic drugs, emphasizing the importance of legislative oversight. Mr. Potter added that PBMs "suck so much money from the pharmacy supply chain," highlighting their significant financial impact. Sen. Marshall then asked what value PBMs provide to patients. Dr. Miller explained that PBMs primarily serve as the constructor of formularies.

Sen. Andy Kim (D-NJ) shifted the discussion to retrospective reviews, asking Dr. Miller to elaborate. Miller responded that while the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) previously blocked some hospital mergers, PBM mergers were approved under the assumption that they would lower drug prices. In retrospect, Dr. Miller argued, this analysis was flawed, as PBM consolidation has not delivered the expected price reductions.

## **340B Drug Pricing Program**

Sen. Jon Husted (R-OH) raised concerns about the effectiveness of the 340B drug pricing program, stating, that "340B is not working," and asked for recommendations to improve it. Dr. Ippolito explained that the program's original goal is to help hospitals afford care for vulnerable populations. He suggested that tying 340B subsidies more directly to patient care could better align the program with its intended purpose.

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