

Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

August 5, 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Samantha Reyes and I am writing as a 26-year-old citizen residing in New York City, New York. In recent news, the rising cost of insulin and the role manufacturers and corporate institutions' involvement in insulin distribution have captured my attention. I was diagnosed with type II Diabetes when I was fifteen and have been fortunate enough to be covered under comprehensive insurance policies my entire life, up to now. The rising cost of insulin directly affects my well being as well as the health of my family members as my mother also has diabetes and takes insulin. In my preparation for the loss of health insurance, I have done extensive research on the available options for insurance coverage as well as considered there may be no options but to pay completely out of pocket. It has come to my attention that my life may be threatened if there is no action taken towards lowering the cost of insulin and taking preventative action against companies who monopolize this niche of the pharmaceutical industry.

The insulin-manufacturing corporation owners Eli Lilly, Sanofi, and Novo Nordisk own 99% of insulin production in the market. According to the article, "The rising cost of insulin: "Horror stories every day"" by CBS News, there is no generic version insulin and the distribution of profit is cloudy as the exchange predominantly happens between the manufacturer and pharmacy benefit managers, drug makers, or insurance companies. Representatives in other states are already investigating how the transactions work between each player in this industry, and I think it would be beneficial for our state government to escalate the importance of participation in this uncovering process. As you know, Sanofi has brought lawsuits against competitor pharmaceutical companies, Merck and Mylan, who have formulated biosimilar versions of their drug. The companies that have produced a widely needed drug are withholding the possibility of making it more affordable and accessible to their consumers by blocking the production of competitor drugs. While I understand the factors that make a product profitable, none of the negotiations between the parties involved seem to care about benefitting the patients.

An ethical issue that arises from the lack of distribution of manufacturing and absence of a generic form of insulin is that it forces its consumers who depend on these prescription medications to ration their dosages. There have been recent heartbreaking stories of individuals who cut their dosages of insulin, resulting in death soon after. The stories have become more personal because I am able to relate to others who are struggling to find alternative plans when there is no available healthcare coverage and the price of medication is sky high. Economically, I find myself to be considered middle-class, which seems to be one of the worst positions at this time as I earn too much to qualify for government assistance, but I do not make enough to comfortably afford a comprehensive health plan. I, myself, have thought about rationing the medication I take, but have concluded I will follow a lifestyle change to be able to control the disease with oral medication.

Taking action towards these pharmaceutical companies needs to happen and hopefully quickly. According to the CDC, Diabetes affects 9.4% of the U.S. population and remains to be a growing health problem. The manufacturing companies are influencing third parties, as by encouraging insurance companies to cover their drugs, forcing consumers to switch medications purely because of cost. I find this to be an issue pharmaceutical companies impose on their consumers as they are forced to research, without making mistakes, about the drugs their health insurance will cover and if the formulas in different brands are the same. My impression from the article, "Why treating diabetes keeps getting more expensive", is that the insulin industry has become an arms race amongst three big companies who are unwilling to make their product more accessible for their consumers. The article highlights the production of many different types insulin, which only the three companies produce, at consistently higher costs. Please consider the many lives these corporate decisions are impacting and how a change such as making a generic medication available will benefit millions of people. I hope this information has gotten your attention and that you look deeper into the issues I have great concern.

Sincerely,

Samantha Reyes