



March 27, 2018

The Honorable William J. Lippert Jr.  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street, Room 405  
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Chair Lippert and Members of the House Health Care Committee:

On behalf of the Epilepsy Foundation and the Epilepsy Foundation of Vermont, we urge you to oppose House Bill 775. This bill would make it harder for people to afford their medications by preventing manufacturer copay assistance for prescription medication. This would translate to unaffordable prescription medication costs which undermines affordability, adherence, and health outcomes.

The Epilepsy Foundation is the leading national health organization that speaks on behalf of the at least 3.4 million Americans, including nearly 6,500 Vermont residents, with epilepsy and seizures. We foster the wellbeing of children and adults affected by seizures through research programs, educational activities, advocacy, and direct services. Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy at some point in their lifetime. For the majority of people living with epilepsy, epilepsy medications are the most common and cost-effective treatment for controlling and/or reducing seizures, and they must have meaningful and timely access to physician-directed care and prescribed medications. Epilepsy medications are not interchangeable and treatment of epilepsy is highly individualized. There is no “one size fits all” treatment option or epilepsy, and the response to medications can be different for each person. Selection of the appropriate medication to prevent seizures is determined by a number of variables, including type of seizure, seizure frequency, age, gender, and other health conditions. Maintaining seizure control with minimal side effects requires careful evaluation and monitoring by physicians as well as strict adherence to the medication schedule by patients. To change, limit, or deny access to medications could be extremely dangerous.

H 775 would prohibit financial support manufacturers provide via copay cards and coupons. This would impact each individual differently, but it would often mean high and unanticipated copays at the pharmacy counter when an individual shows up for their medications. Individuals may abandon medications at the pharmacy counter or adjust their medication regimen by trying to make their prescription last longer and jeopardize their health. People living with complex chronic conditions increasingly face a landscape that makes it difficult to afford the medications prescribed by their provider. This bill would add another access barrier at a time when we need to be focused on ensuring people can afford the medications they need to maintain and improve their quality of life.

The issue is particularly important to the epilepsy community because people living with epilepsy who have their medications switched, or who experience a delay in accessing their



medications, are at a high risk for developing breakthrough seizures and related complications including death. Manufacturers' copay assistance for individuals who are struggling to afford their medications, even with insurance coverage, play a critical role in ensuring they can gain and maintain seizure control and avoid increased medical costs related to preventable seizures, along with lost wages and productivity, not just for individuals living with epilepsy, but also their families and communities.

The Epilepsy Foundation and the Epilepsy Foundation of Vermont urge you to oppose H 775 and focus on public policies that improve access to and affordability of lifesaving medications for everyone, especially people living with complex chronic conditions like epilepsy. Please do not hesitate to contact Beatriz Duque Long, Vice President Public Policy, at 310-918-3764 or [bduquelong@efa.org](mailto:bduquelong@efa.org) with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Audrey Butler, Exec. Director".

Audrey Butler  
Executive Director  
Epilepsy Foundation of Vermont

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip M. Gattone".

Philip M. Gattone, M.Ed.  
President & CEO  
Epilepsy Foundation