



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

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US Representative John Sarbanes to Join Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski to Host Community Senior Forum About Rising Drug Prices

New prescription drug affordability board begins work to lower drug costs with listening tour

WHAT: Community Senior Forum to Discuss Rising Drug Prices

WHO: Johnny Olszewski, Baltimore County Executive

US Representative John Sarbanes

Professor Ebere Onukwuga, Member, Prescription Drug Affordability Board

Vincent DeMarco, President, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative

Jim Gutman, Lead Advocacy Volunteer for Prescription Drugs, Maryland AARP

WHEN: Tuesday, February 18, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

WHERE: Oak Crest Senior Living Community, 8820 Walther Blvd. Parkville, Md.

Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski, US Representative John Sarbanes, and Ebere Onukwuga, a member of the new Maryland Prescription Drug Affordability Board, will lead a Baltimore County community senior forum about rising drug costs, the second in a series of events around the state to hear from the public about the burden of paying for their medications. AARP representative Jim Gutman and Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative President Vincent DeMarco will also take part in the event, to be held at a senior living community in Parkville.

The Prescription Drug Affordability Board, which was established by the legislature in 2019, is beginning its work by reviewing drug costs in the state and hearing public concerns about the affordability of medications. The Board began its work earlier this year.

“Too many Baltimore County residents face challenges in paying for prescription drugs, and it is unacceptable,” said Olszewski. “The new Prescription Drug Affordability Board is a significant step forward, and I hope the board will be able to help bring down the costs of drugs across Maryland.”

“It’s really important for the new Prescription Drug Affordability Board to go out into the community and hear directly from Marylanders who struggle to afford the drugs they need to lead healthy lives,” said Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative President DeMarco. “We applaud

the members of the board for taking on this work. And we thank County Executive Olszewski, who has been a strong supporter of our efforts to bring down drug costs.”

“Many Maryland seniors simply cannot afford their prescriptions. Sometimes they have to choose between paying for their medicines and paying for food,” said Jim Gutman, Lead Advocacy Volunteer for Prescription Drugs for Maryland AARP. “This is unacceptable, and AARP is glad to be working with the Prescription Drug Affordability Board to give seniors a chance to share their stories.”

The Board has the authority to examine the high cost of prescription drugs and ascertain how to make these costs more affordable for Marylanders. In the next couple of years, the Board will have the authority to establish procedures to make high cost drugs more affordable for state and local governments. By 2023, the board will be required to make recommendations to the Maryland General Assembly on how to make high cost drugs more affordable for all Marylanders. Many states across the country are working to replicate Maryland's landmark new law.

The five-member board is chaired by Van Mitchell, a former state Health Secretary. Other members include Eberé Onukwughá, an associate professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, Dr. George S. Malouf Jr., an ophthalmologist and leader of MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society, Professor Gerard F. Anderson, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Hospital Finance and Management, and Johns Hopkins Professor Joseph Levy.

“I am pleased to be serving on this important board and look forward to continuing to hear from Marylanders about how drug prices are affecting their financial well-being,” said Professor Eberé Onukwughá, a member of the Prescription Drug Affordability Board. “Our full board will carefully consider what we hear from the public as we discuss plans for our work to make drugs more affordable.”