



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

MEDIA ADVISORY

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**Chair of New Prescription Drug Affordability Board to
Lead Community Senior Forum About Rising Drug Prices
*Howard County Executive and AARP Official to Take Part in
Event Kicking off the Work of New Drug Board***

WHAT: Community Senior Forum to Discuss Rising Drug Prices

WHO: Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive

US Representative John Sarbanes

Barry Glassman, Harford County Executive

Van Mitchell, Chair, Maryland Prescription Drug Affordability Board

Vincent DeMarco, President, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative

Tammy Bresnahan, Associate State Director of Advocacy, Maryland AARP

WHEN: Monday, January 6, 2020, 12 noon

WHERE: Ellicott City 50+ Center, 9401 Frederick Road, Ellicott City, Md. 21042

Howard County Executive Calvin Ball and Van Mitchell, the chair of the new Maryland Prescription Drug Affordability Board, will lead a Howard County community senior forum about rising drug costs, the first of a series of events around the state to hear from the public about the burden of paying for their medications. US Representative John Sarbanes, Harford County Executive Barry Glassman and Maryland AARP official Tammy Bresnahan will also take part in the event, to be held at a senior center in Ellicott City.

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 will hold its first meeting on Monday, January 13 at 11am in Annapolis.

“It is unacceptable for Howard County residents to have to choose between paying for their prescription drugs or buying groceries, our residents deserve better and we are doing everything in our power to lower prescription drug costs,” said Howard County Executive Calvin Ball. “We're honored to be the first jurisdiction to host these important conversations to be held around the state, Howard County has been and will continue to be at the forefront of health care innovations for our residents. I am also thankful to our partners at the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative and the AARP for their continued efforts on this issue. Our hope is these forums will highlight the incredible burden of rising drug costs and inspire concrete action from the Prescription Drug Affordability Board.” (over)

“We are excited to be part of this event with the new chair of the Prescription Drug Affordability Board and Howard County Executive Ball,” said Maryland Citizens’ Health Initiative President Vincent DeMarco, who will also take part in the community forum. “Too many people across Maryland simply can’t afford to pay for the medications they need to lead healthy lives, and it’s important for Chairman Mitchell to have the opportunity to hear directly from them. This new board has the ability to tackle this issue and help bring down costs for lifesaving medications.”

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 board has five members. Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller and House Speaker Adrienne Jones jointly appointed Mitchell, a former state Health Secretary, as chair. Individually, they also appointed Professor Ebere Onukwugha, an associate professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, and Dr. George S. Malouf Jr., an ophthalmologist and leader of MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society. Attorney General Brian Frosh named Professor Gerard F. Anderson, the director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Hospital Finance and Management, to the board as well. Gov. Larry Hogan named Johns Hopkins Professor Joseph Levey to be a member.

“We are very pleased with these great appointments to the board. These five, particularly former Maryland Health Secretary Van Mitchell, bring excellent experience and knowledge to this issue, and we thank Senate President Miller, Speaker Jones, Attorney General Frosh and Governor Hogan for making these excellent appointments,” DeMarco said.

“I am thrilled to be leading this first in the nation Prescription Drug Affordability Board,” said Chairman Mitchell. “I appreciate very much County Executive Ball hosting this first in our series of events at senior centers across the state to talk about what the Board will do and to hear directly from Maryland's seniors about how high cost drugs are impacting them.”

“Lowering prescription drug costs is a priority for AARP MD,” said AARP’s Bresnahan. “High drug prices disproportionately hurt older Marylanders, who take four to five prescriptions per month. AARP MD is thrilled that the Prescription Drug Affordability Board will look at the high costs of drugs to bring relief to Older Marylanders dependent on life saving medications.”

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