

February 16, 2022

Prescription Drug Affordability & Accessibility Committee
Hearing on House Bill 4595

Chair Guzzardi, Vice-Chair Mason, Republican Spokesperson Demmer, and members of the Prescription Drug Affordability & Accessibility Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is David Ernesto Munar and I am the President and CEO of Howard Brown Health, a federally qualified health center (FQHC) serving more than 40,000 adults and youth at 12 clinical sites across the city of Chicago. We offer a comprehensive suite of services including primary care, behavioral health, HIV/STI prevention, youth and elder services, and community initiatives. Rooted in LGBTQ+ liberation, our mission is to provide affirming healthcare and mobilize for social justice to advance health equity for all. As a FQHC, the 340B program is vital to fulfilling our mission and ensuring that all patients have access to the care and services that they need to stay healthy and thrive. Unfortunately, discriminatory practices by pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) jeopardize our ability to sustain vitally important programs that are funded in whole or in part by the 340B program.

Because of this, Howard Brown Health strongly supports HB 4595 to protect the 340B program and preserve access to care for underserved patients.

FQHCs are known to be good stewards of the 340B program, and that is certainly the case for Howard Brown. We reinvest 100% of our 340B savings into improving care and health outcomes for the marginalized communities that we serve. Our 340B savings support various ongoing efforts to expand our clinical capacity and patient access to care, such as providing mobile healthcare, opening new clinical sites in underserved neighborhoods, and improving our technology and infrastructure to provide top quality care. This expanded clinical capacity has been especially important the last two years as we've worked on the frontlines keeping our communities safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Since April 2020, we've provided over 64,000 COVID-19 tests and 70,000 vaccine doses. We were also able to quickly and effectively pivot to telehealth to keep our patients safe. 340B savings have been crucial to our COVID-19 response.

The 340B program is also vital for sustaining and expanding the comprehensive and holistic wrap-around support services that our patients rely on, especially for services that are chronically underfunded. Some of the programs and services we offer at Howard Brown that are supported by our 340B savings include:

- The Broadway Youth Center (BYC), which provides medical, behavioral, and social support services for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness. In FY21, the BYC

drop-in services (including STI screening, vaccinations, basic needs like sleep and food, etc.) were used over 7000 times.

- The In Power program, which is the first holistic, LGBTQ+ focused sexual assault response program in the nation, providing comprehensive medical, behavioral, and social services to survivors.
- Robust HIV and PrEP patient navigation, education services, and medication access: contributing to the 80% viral suppression rate among Howard Brown patients living with HIV and the over 6,600 unique patients we were able to connect to PrEP in FY21.
- We were also able to provide substantially subsidized or free dental and behavioral healthcare for over 5000 low-income and uninsured patients.

But this is only a snapshot of the essential services we are able to provide because of the 340B Program. Unfortunately, pharmacy benefits managers (PBMs) have engaged in discriminatory practices that deteriorate our ability to generate savings. This undermines the purpose of the 340B program, which is to help fund and support safety net providers. These actions jeopardize our ability to maintain and expand the comprehensive services and programs that our patients rely on. In order to protect the 340B Program and preserve access to care for marginalized and underserved communities, we urge you to vote in favor of HB 4595.

Sincerely,

David Ernesto Munar
President and CEO