

TESTIMONY OF JUDITH AIKEN

for the

U.S. Senate Committee on Finance

hearing on

**“Lower Health Care Costs for Americans: Understanding the Benefits of the
Inflation Reduction Act”**

September 17, 2024

Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, Committee Members

Thank you for inviting me to share my story today.

I'm Judy Aiken – a 70-year-old retired nurse, born and raised in Portland, Maine, where I live with my husband of 47 years.

I have been battling psoriatic arthritis and psoriasis for over four decades. These conditions have taken a heavy toll on my body, but the financial strain of the medications I need has been equally challenging.

Seventeen years ago, my doctor prescribed Enbrel to manage my condition. It's been a lifeline, but one with a staggering price tag. Since its introduction 26 years ago, Enbrel's price has skyrocketed by [more than 700 percent](#). Today, it is priced at \$7,106 for a 30-day supply.

Last year alone, **I paid over \$9,000 out-of-pocket just for this one medication.** The cost was overwhelming. As a nurse, I spent years counseling patients on the importance of taking their medications consistently. But the cruel irony is that I've sometimes found myself skipping doses, unable to follow my own advice due to the prohibitive cost.

Every trip to the pharmacy was a source of anxiety. How much would it cost this time? Could we afford it? What else would we have to sacrifice? My husband and I were constantly juggling our budget – we postponed home repairs and stopped going out to eat.

Then came the Inflation Reduction Act, and with it, a glimmer of hope.

This year, I braced for another 12 months of expensive pharmacy visits. But after paying \$2,150 in January and \$1,141 in February, a real shock came in March. I went to pick up my prescription and discovered my out-of-pocket cost would be \$0 for the rest of the year. I nearly cried at the pharmacy counter. Even after advocating for the passage of the drug price reforms in the Inflation Reduction Act, I was skeptical it would actually benefit me. But it has, and this year my out-of-pocket costs have been capped at \$3,300.

And there's more relief on the horizon. Next year, the out-of-pocket limit will drop further, capping at \$2,000 for *everyone* on Medicare Part D. For patients like me who rely on expensive medications, this is truly life-changing.

But that's not the only IRA provision that I will benefit from. Enbrel was one of the first 10 drugs selected for Medicare price negotiation. After the [inaugural round of negotiated prices](#) were released in August, I learned that beginning in 2026, Enbrel's price will be reduced to \$2,355 per month – a 67 percent reduction.

These lower negotiated prices come after decades of advocacy from patients like me and represent the first time in Medicare's history that the program has directly negotiated drug prices with pharmaceutical corporations. These 10 drugs cover treatments for common conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and blood clots, and the roughly nine million patients on Medicare

who take at least one of these drugs are projected to save \$1.5 billion out of pocket in 2026 alone.

It's important to note that the out-of-pocket savings are made possible by lowering the prices. We cannot do one without the other.

The impact of these changes cannot be overstated. My husband and I can now breathe easier. We're addressing those long-postponed home repairs. And we may even be able to take a trip. But most importantly, I no longer have to choose between my health and our financial stability.

This is the real, tangible impact of the Inflation Reduction Act. It's not just about numbers on a page or political talking points. It's about people – seniors like me, who have worked hard their whole lives, and who can now afford the medications we need to live healthier, more productive lives with dignity.

The IRA demonstrates that when our elected leaders take action, real change is possible. While there's still work to be done to make prescription drugs affordable for all Americans, this is a huge step in the right direction.

I urge you to continue supporting and strengthening these life-saving reforms. They are making a real difference in the lives of millions of American patients.

Thank you for your time and attention to this crucial issue. I look forward to answering your questions.