

## **Testimony of Regina Milner**

### **Senate Committee on Aging**

#### **Lowering Health Care Costs for Nevada Seniors: Taking Action to Bring Down Prescription Drug Prices**

**August 23, 2022**

Senator Rosen, thank you for having me here today to share my experience with insulin and other expensive prescription drugs. My name is Regina Milner. I'm a 60-year-old disabled patient, a patient advocate, a systemic lupus warrior and a resident of Las Vegas, Nevada. I'm also a stiff-person syndrome rare disease warrior who is GAD65 seropositive- that is a one in a million chance. However, most importantly, I am proudest of my titles of mother and grandmother. My children and grandchildren have witnessed my 20+ years of struggling and consistently advocating for diagnoses, medications, and equitable medical care and treatment all while navigating my way through unfair and unequal systemic medical discrimination. In the process of paying for medical care and medicine to try to remain as healthy as possible, I became completely indigent. I presently rely on my daughter (who also suffers from autoimmune disease) to provide me with a roof over my head and the care I need.

My many illnesses require me to use over 20 drugs and medical supplies that include two specific brands of insulin, as well as my Dexcom G6 device and glucose monitor. In addition, I take weekly injections of Benlysta for my lupus and autoimmune diseases. I am also now in need of IVIG treatment. The cost of maintaining my health isn't cheap—one of my lupus medications, Benlysta, has a retail price of almost \$5,000. It's thanks to my enrollment in the Medicare Part D Extra Help program, which subsidizes my Benlysta payment to under \$10, that I can afford it. I also take two insulin products and need insulin twice a day, but the products I use are not included in the formulary. During COVID, my glucose levels increased to over 700, which is extremely dangerous and can result in a diabetic coma. Unfortunately, my physicians didn't understand my type of diabetes and told me that I didn't need oral diabetes medications or insulin. The test results were repeatedly dismissed until I found myself sleeping into a coma. It took several weeks of more advocating for prior authorization to get the correct insulins that worked for my illnesses. I know all too well the dangers of not having access to the lifesaving medications I need.

Senator Rosen, your advocacy and that of your Democratic colleagues is much appreciated. The Inflation Reduction Act, which was just signed into law last week, will cap out-of-pocket costs at \$2,000 per year and cap insulin at \$35 per month for people on Medicare, which is a life-changing amount for folks like me. Instead of rationing or skipping medication, seniors across the country can finally put their health first without being worried about the cost.

Belated disease management and these exponential drug costs have cost me my quality of life. I have worked in many administrative roles and was a game dealer at the former Monte Carlo Resort and Casino on the Las Vegas Strip. I'm a single parent, and I knew I had to make ends meet for my children. But my diseases have made it almost impossible to keep a job. Capping the cost of prescription drugs will make a difference for so many Nevada seniors. I don't have a choice in the medications I take or the diseases I was born with, but I do see a brighter future, especially with the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act and the cost savings to come.

I am losing my ability to verbalize myself clearly, but my next statement is loud and clear. America's seniors have long needed prescription drug reform, and these out-of-pocket cost caps for people on Medicare are the right step forward. I am not alone in this struggle—there are so many of us who need our prescription drugs, especially in the autoimmune disease and chronically ill community. We can't afford to wait. But with the Inflation Reduction Act, we won't have to.

In closing, I am so thankful to wake each day and begin each day with gratefulness. It is by the grace of God that I am alive and standing before you today. I thank you all for your time, and for listening to my medical experience. Again, I sincerely and truly thank you, Senator Jacky Rosen, and all your staff for the opportunity to share my story today and for all your hard work and the successes that you've accomplished to help us.