



**House Bill 3336  
Proponent Testimony**

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American Diabetes Association  
House Commerce and Energy Committee  
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Chairman Byron and Members of the House Commerce and Energy Committee:

My name is Lynette Tolson Somers and I am the Director of State Government Relations for the Mid-Atlantic Region for the American Diabetes Association (ADA). I am pleased to provide this written testimony in support of House Bill 240.

People with diabetes are facing a crisis.

According to the Virginia Department of Health, about 1 out of every 11 people in Virginia have diabetes (over 631,000 Virginians) and more than 1 out of 3 adults have prediabetes. Many people with diabetes need insulin to live and to avoid devastating complications that include blindness, kidney failure, lower limb amputation, heart attack, stroke, and even death. For them, the cost has spiraled out of control and is beyond the reach of many.

Insulin prices have tripled between 2002 and 2013<sup>1</sup> and have doubled since then<sup>2</sup> - for a medicine that is nearly 100 years old. There have been incredible advances in research and development and technology that have improved the lifespan and quality of life for those with diabetes, but the formula for insulin has not changed since the 1990s.

Without insulin, people with diabetes die and scaling back on insulin can lead to costly and sometimes deadly complications. People with diabetes also require on average two to four vials of insulin per month. So, when deductibles are high, people (with insurance!) end up paying upwards of \$1,200 per month simply to live or they're rationing their insulin, either taking less than the dose they have been prescribed or skipping doses altogether, which leads to deadly complications and high costs to the state. ADA research has shown that, for one in four insulin users, cost has impacted their use.<sup>3</sup>

HB 240 would help people in state-regulated health plans by capping the cost they are paying for their insulin. By ensuring that insulin is affordable, people with diabetes are then in a

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position to stay healthy and productive. Proper management of their diabetes in turn reduces costly complications. The Association estimated that the cost of diabetes in Virginia in 2017 was more than \$8.4 billion<sup>4</sup>. By keeping insulin affordable, we can help keep people with diabetes out of the ER and the hospital, and away from expensive and potentially disabling or deadly complications.

It's time to reduce the financial burden on Virginia diabetes patients who need insulin. People with diabetes, your constituents with diabetes are sometimes forced to choose between insulin and rent or between insulin and food to survive.

The American Diabetes Association believes that no individual in need of life-saving medications should ever go without due to prohibitive costs or accessibility issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Diabetes Care 2018;41:1299–1311 | <https://doi.org/10.2337/dci18-0019>

<sup>2</sup> "Spending on Individuals with Type 1 Diabetes and the Role of Rapidly Increasing Insulin Prices," Health Care Cost Institute, January 2019 - <https://healthcostinstitute.org/research/publications/entry/spending-on-individuals-with-type-1-diabetes-and-the-role-of-rapidly-increasing-insulin-prices>

<sup>3</sup> American Diabetes Association, Insulin Affordability Survey, 2018, available at <http://main.diabetes.org/dorg/PDFs/2018-insulin-affordability-survey.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Diabetes Care 2019;42:1661–1668 | <https://doi.org/10.2337/dc18-1226>

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