



The Ohio Drug Price Relief Act (“Issue 2” on the November 2017 ballot, statewide) does not do what it purports to do – lower drug costs for Ohioans. Issue 2 would prohibit our state government from paying more for prescription drugs than the lowest price paid by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA”). While this sounds promising, Issue 2 does not guarantee access to lower cost prescription drugs. It would also give the ballot issue’s four named sponsors the right to intervene at taxpayer expense in any legal challenges that may be filed against it if it becomes law.

Equitas Health and 60+ coalition partners oppose Issue 2 for the following reasons:

- **The lowest price paid by the VA is unknowable.** The price the VA pays for any particular drug is a moving target. Under federal law, the VA receives special discounts on prescription drugs for veterans in honor of their service to our country. In addition to specified percentage discounts, the VA negotiates additional, proprietary discounts on many prescription drugs.
- **Many drugs used by Equitas Health patients already receive as good a discount as the VA’s, if not better.** Drugs purchased by the Ohio Medicaid program and the Ohio HIV/AIDS Drug Assistance Program (“ODAP”) receive discounts very similar to those achieved by the VA, if not better. There is no guarantee that implementing Issue 2 will result in lower drug prices for Medicaid and ODAP drugs and, indeed, it could result in higher prices. The ballot proposal is not only unworkable but could actually end up increasing drug costs for state programs while also reducing patients’ access to needed medications.
- **Issue 2 will not lower drug costs for drugs utilized by the vast majority of Ohioans.** Seven million Ohioans—64 percent of the state’s population—are insured through their employers, have private insurance, or otherwise don’t obtain their prescription drugs through state programs, so they aren’t covered under this proposal.
- **Health care professionals are opposed to Issue 2.** Ohio health care providers, including Equitas Health, are concerned about affordable medications. However, passing the ballot issue could result in a “double whammy” – increased drug costs and reduced access to needed medications for vulnerable Ohioans. The majority of Medicaid recipients, for instance, are low-income women, children and infants who use numerous medications—including many specialty drugs—that are not on the VA’s relatively narrow formulary. Health care trade associations, including the Ohio Nurses Association, the Ohio State Medical Association, the Ohio Hospital Association, the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Ohio Pharmacists Association, and many others, oppose Issue 2.
- **Issue 2 could cost Ohio taxpayers money.** The time and effort our state government would expend in trying to implement a plan that experts say is unworkable will cost money, not save it. The lack of detail and information about how to implement the measure is likely to lead to bureaucratic in-fighting, delays, lawsuits and higher costs for taxpayers. And because the promoters of this ballot issue wrote into it an unprecedented provision giving themselves the right to intervene at taxpayer expense in any legal challenges that may be filed against it if it becomes law, taxpayers would be stuck paying their attorney fees, win or lose.