

## **What is Diabetes?**

Diabetes is a disease in which the body has too much sugar in the bloodstream. This can occur for a variety of reasons. Insulin is a hormone which helps the body regulate how much sugar is in the blood. In cases of diabetes, the pancreas, the organ responsible for producing insulin, may not produce enough insulin. This is known as Type 2 diabetes, the most common type. In some cases, the pancreas may not produce any insulin at all. This is known as Type 1 diabetes, the less common type. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) reports that nearly 34.2 million Americans have diabetes (10.2% of the population). Additionally, 14.3 million people over age 65 have diabetes (26.8% of people over 65). These figures show us that diabetes affects many people, and that discussing diabetes care is an important goal.

## **How Does This Relate to Policy?**

In order to treat diabetes, many people buy insulin. In most cases, patients don't have a choice whether to purchase it or not, since it's a matter of life or death. We can refer to these types of medications as life-saving drugs. Many life-saving drugs, especially insulin, have seen their costs skyrocket over the past few years. The National Aids Treatment Advocacy Project (NATAP) reported that in 2016, a person with type 1 diabetes would pay \$5,705, on average, for insulin every year. This is especially a problem since many diabetes patients are on Medicare or Medicaid, and they cannot afford this large sum of money. Additionally, the ADA also reports diabetes patients pay thousands of dollars in other healthcare fees related to their disease. There has been bipartisan consensus on this issue. Politicians on both sides of the aisle agree that reducing the cost for life-saving medications is a necessary goal. However, their approach to solve this issue is vastly different. Some propose simply implementing price limits, while others call for structural changes in payments systems such as a medicare-for-all system.

## **Solutions to Rising Costs of Insulin**

Many bills have been introduced in state legislatures and Congress to combat rising costs. There are also many recommended solutions to curb the costs. The Endocrine Society recommends that greater transparency measures be implemented so the costs are better understood. Additionally, they recommend government negotiation of prices, eliminating rebates, reducing restrictions for patient assistance programs, training medical professionals to use lower-cost insulins, requiring pharmacists to discuss lower-cost options with patients, and many more. If you would like a full list of recommendations, please click [here](#).