

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish reference prices for prescription drugs for purposes of Federal health programs.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MERKLEY introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish reference prices for prescription drugs for purposes of Federal health programs.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Low Drug Prices Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. REFERENCE PRICES FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.**

6 (a) REFERENCE PRICES.—The Secretary of Health
7 and Human Services (referred to in this section as the
8 “Secretary”), in accordance with subsection (b), shall es-
9 tablish annual reference prices for each prescription drug.

1 Notwithstanding any other provision of law, with respect
2 to enrollees or beneficiaries in any of the Federal health
3 programs described in subsection (c), the total acquisition
4 cost (including the amount covered by the Federal health
5 program and any cost-sharing amount and taking into ac-
6 count any discount or rebate provided by the manufac-
7 turer) for a drug shall not exceed the reference price for
8 such drug.

9 (b) CRITERIA.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each year, the Secretary
11 shall establish the reference price for each prescrip-
12 tion drug under subsection (a) by determining the
13 median price for the drug among the reference coun-
14 tries.

15 (2) REFERENCE COUNTRIES.—For purposes of
16 paragraph (1), the reference countries are Japan,
17 Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Can-
18 ada, Australia, Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland,
19 and Sweden.

20 (c) FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAMS.—The reference
21 prices established under subsection (a) shall apply with re-
22 spect to covered inpatient and outpatient drugs under—

23 (1) the Medicare program under title XVIII of
24 the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.);

1 (2) a State Medicaid plan under title XIX of
2 the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.);

3 (3) the State Children’s Health Insurance Pro-
4 gram under title XXI of the Social Security Act (42
5 U.S.C. 1397aa et seq.);

6 (4) the TRICARE program under chapter 55 of
7 title 10, United States Code;

8 (5) hospital care and medical services furnished
9 by the Department of Veterans Affairs under chap-
10 ters 17 and 18 of title 38, United States Code;

11 (6) the Federal Employees Health Benefits
12 Program established under chapter 89 of title 5,
13 United States Code; and

14 (7) any health program, service, function, activ-
15 ity, or facility funded, in whole or part, under the
16 Indian Health Care Improvement Act (25 U.S.C.
17 1601 et seq.), including through direct or contract
18 care provided under such Act or through a contract
19 or compact under the Indian Self-Determination and
20 Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304 et seq.).

21 (d) **APPLICABILITY TO OTHER PURCHASERS OF**
22 **DRUGS.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, as
23 a condition for receiving reimbursements under any of the
24 Federal programs described in subsection (c) for any drug,
25 a drug manufacturer shall offer prescription drugs at the

1 reference price to all individuals, including individuals who
2 are not insured and individuals who are covered under a
3 group health plan or group or individual health insurance
4 coverage. In the case of individuals covered by a group
5 health plan or group or individual health insurance cov-
6 erage, such requirement is met if the amount covered
7 under such plan or coverage plus the cost-sharing amount
8 does not exceed the reference price.

9 (e) APPLICABILITY TO BRAND AND GENERIC
10 DRUGS.—The reference price established under subsection
11 (a) shall apply to drugs approved under subsection (e) or
12 (j) of section 505 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cos-
13 metic Act (21 U.S.C. 355) or under subsection (a) or (k)
14 of section 351 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.
15 262).