



April 2, 2018

Policy Memo:  
The Need to Fight Big Pharma

I understand the challenges of dealing with our healthcare system; my daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes when she was six years old. Once, she suffered a diabetic seizure in the middle of the night, and if we hadn't heard her screams, she would have died. My daughter bravely faced a childhood filled with the constant risk of diabetic complications. Later, she was diagnosed with another disease, Narcolepsy with Cataplexy. And then, a few years after her original diagnosis, my son was also diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes.

So, as a parent, I've experienced the stress of waiting in an emergency room with a sick child, hoping for a better diagnosis or rushing out of work to get to the emergency room after a child has fallen ill. And anyone who goes to the drugstore to fill a prescription knows that the cost of staying healthy is spiraling out of control. The price of insulin for treating diabetes has soared *by nearly 300% in recent years, while the income of the typical American family has been stagnant.*

When big pharmaceutical companies don't act as responsible corporate citizens, it is the duty of our elected officials to speak out and end the abuse of their monopolistic pricing power.

Congressman Elliot Engel has been essentially *silent on this issue*. This is probably not a coincidence. Congressman Engel takes a lot of money from Big Pharma companies.

We face a national health crisis, and Big Pharma is part of the problem. It's the job of the Federal government to **ensure that life-saving drugs are affordable for all Americans**. My proposals below are designed to solve this crisis, and, as your Congressman, I will truly work tirelessly to get them enacted.

1. Control the spiraling costs of life-saving pharmaceuticals by **requiring Medicare to use its bargaining power to negotiate a better deal on drugs for consumers**. Shockingly, today this is actually *against the law*, so I support legislation to empower Medicare with new authority to get better prices for Medicare customers.

2. It's abundantly clear that we must **increase Federal funding and provide tax incentives for pure science research that seeks to find cures for diseases**. Big Pharma makes money off of maintenance drugs, not from curative drugs, so of course they don't spend their research money on cures. But our goal should be to focus on the best health *outcomes* and *end disease*, not merely manage it, and only the Federal government can properly provide the needed financial incentives. Sadly, "scientific" and "research" have been dirty words in the halls of this Congress, but I will change that.

3. We can import food from Canada, why not prescription drugs? We should **allow US citizens to freely purchase medicine from Canada**. According to Senator Bernie Sanders, the US spends more than \$1,000 per year on prescription drugs *per person* – that's *40% more than Canada* spends to achieve roughly the same health effect. Most Americans support this freedom to purchase, but Congress doesn't. Why? Many members of Congress take money from Pharma PACs and their voices have been silenced by this money. That is why I am also supporting a ban on all corporate PAC money. This is wrong.

4. **The Justice Department should use antitrust powers to break-up big Pharma companies that don't act as responsible corporate citizens.**

5. Drug companies have abused their patent-protected market power. We need to better regulate price gouging and **shorten the period of time for which patents are granted**. And we should **refuse to extend the patents held by bad-citizen Pharma companies**, particularly in drug categories where there are no generic substitutes to create competition.

It is vital for all families to have access to quality, affordable healthcare, to fairly priced pharmaceuticals and to life-saving technology. I honestly believe this is a *right* for all Americans – and should not be a privilege reserved for the wealthy. We need people in Congress who care, who aren't in the pocket of Big Pharma, and are free to do what's right. Without a healthy country, we certainly can't be a great one, so making quality health care available and affordable to all will be one of my personal top priorities when I get to Congress.