

**TO: Patients For Affordable Drugs Now**  
**FROM: Geoff Garin, Hart Research Associates**  
**DATE: September 19, 2019**  
**RE: Key Takeaways from Focus Groups**

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*On behalf of Patients For Affordable Drugs Now, Hart Research conducted four focus groups among swing voters in Des Moines, IA, and Denver, CO: two among 34- to 54-year-old swing voters and two among swing voters age 55 and older. The focus groups were conducted on September 9 and 10, 2019. This memo summarizes key findings and themes that emerged from the discussions.*

1. When given the broad parameters of the House bill to reform prescription drug prices, (now known as the *Lower Drug Costs Now Act*), voters across party lines have an incredibly positive reaction.
  - ◆ When presented with a summary of the House bill, voters nearly unanimously support it. They believe the bill will have a significant impact on lowering drug prices for the American people.
2. Three provisions of the House bill that stand out to swing voters in a very positive way are:
  - (1) Allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with pharmaceutical companies,
  - (2) Ensuring that all Americans, whether they have government or private insurance, will experience lower prescription drug prices, and
  - (3) Limiting out-of-pocket costs for people on Medicare to no more than \$2,000 per year.
3. Prior to the focus group sessions, most swing voters were completely unaware that Medicare is not allowed to negotiate directly with drug companies, or that we are the only developed country in the world that has such a ban. Awareness of both facts has a significant impact on voters' positive reaction to the House bill.
  - ◆ Upon learning about the ban on negotiations, voters intuitively say that it should be overturned and that Medicare should be allowed to negotiate with drug companies. Voters see negotiation as an important step to reining in drug prices. To these voters, this is an extremely important provision of the House bill. Without this provision, voters are skeptical that drug prices will meaningfully decrease.
4. Voters blame pharma for the problem of high prescription drug costs. Swing voters believe that pharmaceutical companies charge high prices because they can, and that there are no sufficient market or regulatory forces to stop them.

An effective framing for the House bill is that it finally levels the playing field for patients and taxpayers by allowing Medicare to negotiate prices with big drug companies.

- ◆ Communicating the fact that pharmaceutical companies charge less for the same drugs in other countries than they do in the United States and yet are making profits in those countries also is a convincing reason to support the House bill.

The following messages are considered the most convincing in support of the House bill:

Under current laws, the government is prohibited from negotiating directly with drug companies. This bill levels the playing field for patients and taxpayers by allowing Medicare to negotiate prices with drug companies.

Drug companies made over \$30 billion in profits last year—a much higher rate of profit than the rest of the healthcare industry. And drug companies admit they earn profits overseas, where they charge prices that are much lower than in the United States.

5. Notably, pharmaceutical companies' claims that this bill will stifle investments in R&D are met with skepticism and have a very limited impact on swing voters. Many see pharma's message point as a scare tactic that drug companies have used for years to avoid reforms that will cut into their profits.
  - ◆ A very effective response to this claim is that the NIH actually spends more money on R&D than any single pharmaceutical company.