

THE CLERK: Proponent, Pat McWhorter.

MR. MCWHORTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members.

You know I'm a hired hand, but I stand here before you on behalf of Wal—Mart Stores, Incorporated, one of the largest employers — private employers in Alabama, as well as the Alabama Grocers Association who represent about a thousand supermarkets; also, Publix Corporation, which has ninety stores in Alabama, all hundred and fifty — or 145 to 150 stores of Wal—Mart retail stores have pharmacies in them. We're in most counties, sadly not all, but Publix — all of the Publix stores have pharmacies.

And the independent grocer is our backbone. And many of them, as a lot of you know, partner with independent pharmacies to provide the service that's needed by our customers. That's what we're all about is bringing to them the fresh foods, the good foods, the good prices, whatever it takes to supply — to serve those counties, every county in the state.

We are in favor of PBM reform. We trust the judgment of this committee and this body to do what you think is best.

We do think 99 is tougher. It's got more in it.

One thing that is attractive to our larger members is that the person who buys the policy will get the rebates instead of the insurance companies and the PBMs and those folks now. There's a few of ours that are self—insured. Most purchase insurance just like your businesses do.

In fact, after I — I was on my way back from seeing my grandbaby last summer and stopped in Istanbul. My — one of my diabetes medicines that costs here a thousand dollars a month, do you know how much I bought it for in Istanbul? Twenty dollars a month.

SENATOR SMITHERMAN: That's what I'm talking about.

MR. MCWHORTER: Twenty dollars a month.

SENATOR SMITHERMAN: That's what I'm talking about.

MR. MCWHORTER: So the root of the problem — to get to Senator Smitherman's point — is not here. The root of the problem is in Washington.

The root of the problem is that the National Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association spent somewhere close to 150 million dollars lobbying Congress to make sure that they don't do stuff like that.

So the problem we've got here is the common good of the people of Alabama. We've got a health care crisis. We closed another ER in a rural county this week, right? We've got pharmacies closing everywhere. We've got businesses that are answerable to stockholders that at some point are going to say, you're not making any money in pharmacy in Alabama; you're going to have to quit doing it.

We don't control that. You control the playing field. You control leveling the playing field. And that's what we don't have right now. That's what we've got to have.

My members do not own a PBM. They compete with drugstores that do own PBMs. That's not a level playing field for us.

Thank you for your time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. McWhorter.