

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Tony Bono. I am on the Board of Directors of the Access to Care program.

Access to Care provides access to LOCAL primary health care services to low-income Cook County residents who live in the suburbs or northwest Chicago. Members of Access to Care receive a primary medical home and may see their Access to Care physician as many times in a year as they need to for a \$5 co-pay per visit. They may get their diagnostic X-rays and lab tests done in their own community, also for a \$5 co-pay. And they are able to get their prescriptions filled at any local Walgreens for a \$15 co-pay for generic medications and \$30 for brand-name medications.

I agreed to serve on the Access to Care Board because as a pharmacist, I have seen the consequences for people unable to afford medication. I feel strongly about people being able to manage their conditions with medication. Have you ever been unable to afford to see a doctor or get your prescription filled?

To have high blood pressure and not be able to afford your medication could lead to a stroke!

To have high cholesterol and not be able to afford your medication could lead to a heart attack!

To have diabetes and not be able to afford your medication could lead to amputation, blindness or multiple complications like other organ failures.

To have depression and not be able to afford your medication could ultimately lead to suicide!

All of these conditions, untreated, can lead to death.

Managing chronic illness with affordable medical care is not just a matter of quality of life for the patient. It has a greater societal impact. When people are ill and cannot afford to see a doctor or to get their medication it leads to a loss in productivity. They call in sick to work, which in many cases means no pay. They may lose their jobs or be unable to work because their illness causes an inability to perform tasks. All of this results in further cost to society both from public aid expenditures and through difficult family situations. I appreciate that ATC provides access to these services and access to affordable medications before disease becomes devastating to the patients and their families. The loss in productivity and the hardship it places on the family as a whole perpetuates further and future societal problems. Access to Care is a cost-effective way to make sure that low income residents of suburban Cook County are able to manage their chronic illness and remain active and productive and out of the emergency room.

I sincerely thank you for your support of the Access to Care program and urge you to continue that support in the 2018 budget.

Tony Bono