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For me, access to medical care has been an ongoing struggle for a number of reasons. I have both physical and development disabilities, so I sometimes have difficulty understanding how to access care. I now know that when I need transportation, I can call the number on the back of my medical assistance card, and a ride will be arranged for me. But I was covered by MA for some time, struggling to find rides to appointments. Some education about benefits and services would have spared me both physically and mentally. In addition to transportation, the prescription co-pay policy has forced me to delay filling prescriptions when I have no money. I am a diabetic, so it is unsafe for me to delay or avoid medical care. I know, in a diabetic crisis, that a trip to the emergency room will be my only choice for care. I know, too, that access to medications would be, by far, less costly than the trip to ER.

Finally, I want you to know how significant my physical struggles are to my mental health. I have had a history of depression and I know that physical pain, isolation, and lack of social support make me vulnerable to clinical depression. Untreated depression leaches my confidence and leaves me without motivation. The dilemma of meeting the co-pay for antidepressants can pose further threats to my mental health. At times like that, I feel like I am on a treadmill that has no "off" button.

My own experience leads me to ask this commission to work hard to ease the barriers related to medical access and treatment. Thank-you for hearing my concerns.

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