A prescription for unnecessary suffering and death

Michael Crowley’s news story (“Officials target seniors’ programs,” Metro, Oct. 25, Metro) on the politics of making prescription drugs affordable was short on practical solutions.

Many smart state legislatures, though working to expand the Senior Pharmacy Program, realize that we can’t afford to keep throwing more tax money at drug companies.

Americans pay the world’s highest prices for drugs. Drug manufacturers — the most profitable industry, year after year — claim that any government action reducing prices or profits will destroy research.

They are wrong. They are advocating a prescription for unnecessary suffering and death.

Soaring drug costs mean we must go without and suffer, pay more — or obtain more medications without paying more. The third choice is financially feasible and fair for all.

Government can and must negotiate a peace treaty with drug makers that protects needed research funding and fair profits while assuring us all the drugs we need. Americans’ current drug spending, about $120 billion this year, is enough.

After drug makers do research and build factories, making more pills costs little — probably as little as 5 percent of retail prices. So it would cost just $1 billion to make drugs worth $20 billion to us. They could offset that by cutting advertising or CEO pay.

Drug makers’ political clout will paralyze federal and state action as long as we are silent. Since Congress won’t act soon, our Legislature must.

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