



April 1, 2015

Chair Monnes-Anderson,
Members of the Senate Health Care Committee

Re: Support of SB 661

Chair Monnes-Anderson, Members of the Senate Health Care Committee:
On behalf of the organizations listed below, we are writing in support of SB 661. The issues of effective pain management, prescription drug abuse and addiction are inherently and unfortunately linked.

People living with health conditions, which cause short-term or chronic pain, can and do benefit from traditional opiate pain medications in immediate and time-released formulas. Unfortunately these drugs are widely prescribed, and also widely abused.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Oregon ranks within the top third of states for high-dose opioid prescriptions, and fourth, nationwide in long-term opioid prescriptions.

Recent changes in federal law reclassifying hydrocodone from a Schedule 3 (III) to a Schedule 2 (II) were designed to address the issue of prescription abuse, and are a start. However many existing long-term opioid pain medications including current Abuse Deterrent Formulations (ADF) drugs, are susceptible to tampering. Medications with abuse deterrent formulations contain physical or chemical properties that can prevent chewing, crushing, cutting, grating, grinding, or dissolving.

Prescription drug abuse impacts law enforcement, our communities and our public health. This has been recently illustrated in Scott County, Indiana, a county of just under 24,000 people that is the epicenter of an HIV outbreak infecting at least 81 people in an area that sees an average of 5 new cases per year.

The outbreak is linked to abuse of the drug Opana, a drug reformulated to earlier ADF standards, in 2012. Indiana Governor Pence this week declared a state of emergency authorizing a temporary 30-day needle exchange program to operate.

According to Dr. William Cooke, the only doctor in Austin, a town in Scott County, has had a "torrent of cases in recent years, he said, and a number of overdoses and cases of endocarditis, an infection of the lining of the heart that can be caused by injecting drugs with dirty needles."



In 2006 ECONorthwest a local consulting firm, estimated the total cost of drug and alcohol abuse to the Oregon economy at \$5.9 billion, to the costs of healthcare, productivity, crime and law enforcement. This number while staggering, doesn't include the average one time cost to treat hepatitis C of \$100,000 or the average cost of \$23,000 annually to treat HIV.

The link between prescription drug abuse and public health is very real, as Dr. Cooke added, "We had all the ingredients in place for this. I suspect a lot of rural America does."

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the issue of prescription drug abuse and ADF. If you have any questions, please contact BJ Cavnor at 206/601-8453.

Sincerely,

BJ Cavnor
Executive Director,
One in Four Chronic Health

Lorren Sandt,
Executive Director,
Caring Ambassadors Program

Enclosed: Wall Street Journal article, Indiana Tribune article, Washington Post article.