

June 8, 2015

Senator Alan Bates, Co-Chair  
Representative Nancy Nathanson, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services  
Oregon Legislative Assembly

Re: SB 900

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

OSPIRG is neutral on SB 900 as it stands. The bill would not cause harm, and the data on health care costs it would provide may have some uses, such as informing policymakers and the public about average price variations between hospitals, and between regions and localities across the state, which could potentially help inform decisions about policy and funding priorities. However, we do not believe that it will make progress toward empowering Oregon consumers struggling with opaque health care prices to make more informed choices and take personal responsibility for their own health care costs.

To provide some context to the Subcommittee's deliberations, OSPIRG has submitted a white paper entitled *Post the Price, Please*. The white paper compares SB 900 to a bill OSPIRG supported, SB 891. While SB 891 will not move forward this Legislative Session, we would encourage the Subcommittee to consider the ideas put forward in the bill when considering the appropriate strategy for advancing health care price transparency in Oregon.

Today, medical prices are often hidden until patients receive a bill, and many bills contain extra charges and surprising fees. With Oregonians picking up an ever-greater portion of their own health care costs in the form of higher deductibles and coinsurance, it's more important than ever for consumers to know the price of health care up front.

SB 900 will not answer consumers' need for accurate, actionable information about their own health care costs. This is because SB 900 provides average historical prices for services, which may be quite different from the amount that may show up in a bill.

Oregonians deserve to know the price for health care services so they can take charge of their own health care costs. If the Subcommittee is interested in advancing SB 900, we would urge you to consider amendments to strengthen the bill by making the data more accurate and actionable for consumers, and by incorporating measures to require health care providers to begin to take responsibility for communicating their own prices to their customers, like other businesses do. We would be happy to work with the Subcommittee and other stakeholders to strengthen the bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jesse Ellis O'Brien, OSPIRG Health Care Advocate