

TO: The Oregon House Committee on Health Care  
FR: Ann Neilson, Prescription drug patient, Madras  
DA: Feb. 5, 2018  
RE: Testimony in support of House Bill 4005

Chair Greenlick, members of the Committee, thank you for letting me share my story today.

My name is Ann Neilson. I am a retired Registered Nurse from Madras.

I suffer from Chronic Dry Eye Syndrome. My doctor prescribed Restasis 13 years ago to slow the damage being caused to my eyes. Unfortunately, I cannot take my full dose because it is so expensive.

As you may recall from headlines, Restasis is manufactured by the drug company Allergan, which was recently in the news for giving the patent of my medication – and \$13.75 million - to a New York tribe. This was a ploy to hold off cheaper generic medications that would be more affordable for me. Fortunately, a Texas judge ruled that wasn't legal but the company is appealing and during this court battle patients like me are still waiting.

A full dose of Restasis costs me more than \$2,062 per year out of pocket after our insurance pays \$5,157. It is important that I take the drug regularly so that I can keep my corneas healthy. Without proper treatment, my vision could be seriously damaged. Recently, I started to buy Restasis from Canada, because there it only costs \$1,137 without insurance. It isn't fair though. I shouldn't have to get medication from another country just because the drug company, Allergan, continues to raise prices.

On top of this, two months ago, my husband was diagnosed with Atrial fibrillation and the cardiologist prescribed him Xarelto to prevent blood clots. For the Xarelto, he will pay almost \$2,000 per year after insurance pays nearly \$3,000.

Restasis has been on the market since April 2003. We've already seen how Allergan is attempting to abuse the patent system and there is nothing to keep them from raising the price year after year. Worst of all, there is no way to know how they justify or use their price increases.

Between the Xarelto and the Restasis, our fixed income is being compromised.

As a nurse, I know there are lots of other stories out there. When working in Home Health, I discovered scores of patients taking half their prescribed doses or skipping doses due to limited incomes, causing poor health outcomes.

I believe patients deserve to know why drug prices are increasing. I need Restasis to protect my eyes, but some of my patients need their prescription drugs to survive. This bill is an important step toward making sure that all patients can afford the medications they need.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my story. On behalf of patients across our state, I urge you to support HB 4005.