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February 14, 2019

Representative Mitch Greenlick, Chair
House Committee on Health Care
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 2689, 2658, 2753, 2754, 2755

Chair Greenlick and Members of the Committee:

I write today in support of HB 2689, 2658, 2753, 2754, and 2755 on behalf of the almost 900 City of Portland professional and technical employees represented by PROTEC17.

Because our members have historically chosen medical benefits for themselves and their families over higher wages, our union has been closely involved with the oversight of health plans at many of the largest public employers in the Pacific Northwest, including the City of Portland. While we watched with relief as high medical cost inflation has subsided, in many plans, prescription drug prices are now driving significant portions of the year-to-year cost increases.

As prescription drug prices increase, we have seen these costs take larger amounts of funding from public employers. Rather than spending money public services which directly stimulate the Oregon economy, an increasing amount of public funds are being sent to large out-of-state pharmaceutical companies to cover prescription price increases.

We support these bills because we believe that while increasing price transparency has been a necessary first step, this must be coupled with policies to allow for viable market solutions to control the prices of drugs for Oregonians. Allowing the importation of drugs from Canada, requiring notices for price increases in order to give medical providers and insurers time to adjust their practices, and encouraging the use of generics, are sensible policies that will benefit all Oregonians, both through lower drug costs and lower overall medical costs.

We thank you for your attention to these matters, and hope you will support policies that will both lower prices for Oregonians as health care consumers but also leave more public employer funds available for education, law enforcement, housing, and other necessary public services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elliot Levin", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Elliot Levin
Research Director and Legislative Advocate
PROTEC17