

Date: 2/19/19

To: The Honorable Mitch Greenlick, Chair; The Honorable Hayden, Vice-Chair; The Honorable Nosse, Vice-Chair; Members of the House Health Care Committee

From: Anonymous constituent, Hillsboro/Beaverton

RE: Support for HB 2689 and HB 2658 to lower prescription drug prices

Chair Greenlick, Vice-Chairs Hayden and Nosse, and members of the House Health Care Committee,

I am writing to ask for your support on two important bills: HB 2689 and HB 2658. HB 2689 will allow for the safe, legal importation of lower-cost prescriptions from Canada, and HB 2658 will give consumers like me 60-days advance notice of price increases.

I live in the Hillsboro/Beaverton area and am 65-years-old. As a bisexual man who lived through the 80s AIDS epidemic, maintaining my sexual health is of the utmost importance to me. I have always practiced safe sex, but as someone who has watched former partners and friends experience HIV/AIDS, you can never be too safe.

I visited the Portland Clinic last September where I was educated about the HIV-prevention drug Truvada. Truvada is a once-a-day pill that has been around since 2004 that has been proven to be over 90% effective in preventing HIV when used regularly. It seemed like a no-brainer. I got a prescription.

Originally, I only paid \$8 out-of-pocket for Truvada with Medicare. Then, a year ago, my pharmacist called and asked if I wanted to keep filling it, as the cost was going to be increasing to \$500 out-of-pocket. I almost dropped the phone on the floor. I had filed for social security in March 2018, and started a 20-hour/week retirement job to make ends meet. Apparently with this very small income, I would be expected to pay over 60 times as much for the medication.

Gilead Sciences, a California-based pharmaceutical company, holds the patent for Truvada, which is the ONLY medication approved by the FDA for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). According to ACT UP, and AIDS-advocacy group, [Truvada only costs Gilead \\$6/month to manufacture, but they are charging up to \\$1,500/month](#). For many people, especially those who are high-risk and lack insurance coverage, this price makes Truvada completely inaccessible.

I believe in Capitalism, but this is not a free market. Truvada is a preventative drug, meaning its regular and widespread use could lower health care costs for everyone. It seems like a drug that can prevent AIDS should be accessible to all, but the pharmaceutical industry only seems the profit they can make.

House Bill 2689 could make Truvada available through Canadian importation at a much lower cost. House Bill 2685 would ensure that people like me get 60-days rather than 60 minutes advance notice when our prices are going to skyrocket. For many prescriptions, Truvada included, there is a tapering-off period, or you'll experience very adverse side effects. Giving folks 60-days notice is the least we can do to be humane.

I hope that you will consider supporting these bills and making life-saving prescriptions more accessible to all Oregonians.

Sincerely,
Constituent, Hillsboro/Beaverton

Sources:

<https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/05/act-up-is-challenging-gilead-to-make-truvada-more-accessible.html>

https://tonic.vice.com/en_us/article/qvmd9x/prep-truvada-prices-cant-use-coupons

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/06/30/624045995/rising-cost-of-prep-a-pill-that-prevents-hiv-pushes-it-out-of-reach-for-many>