



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

6401 SE Foster ▪ Portland, OR 97206

February 19, 2019

Chair Greenlick and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the more than 80,000 public and private sector workers represented by SEIU local 49 and 503, we urge your support of House Bills 2689, 2680, 2679, 2658 and 2690. Many SEIU members continue to struggle to afford health care for themselves and their families, especially the prescription drugs that they rely on to stay healthy and continue working.

Oregonians today are paying more at the pharmacy, consumers experience higher insurance premiums, and employers often choose to push a higher cost burden onto workers, decreasing their access to life-saving drugs. HB 2689, 2680, 2679, 2658 and 2690 will provide valuable information and warning to consumers about pharmaceutical drug price increases, and take important steps to ensure working Oregonians can afford the prescription drugs they need.

SEIU members are concerned that the price for critical prescriptions like insulin have at times more than doubled. From 2008 to 2015 over 400 generic drugs saw a 1000% increase in their prices. In other industrialized countries consumers are being charged half as much for their medications as working Oregon families, and these bills will help address that disparity.

Additionally, cities, counties, school districts and public safety budgets are feeling the squeeze of skyrocketing price increases, even for older drugs that have been on the market for years. As far back as 2014- 15, costs experienced by PEBB for specialty medications were already increasing 28.4%, and costs for brand prescriptions rising 16.3%, even while the number of brand drugs prescribed went down 5.4%. This is not sustainable and if left unchecked will continue to undermine our state's goal of keeping cost growth to 3.4% for PEBB.

HB 2689, 2680, 2679, 2658 and 2690 are a significant step to address these problems that are impacting not only SEIU members but all Oregonians.

Prescription drugs have saved lives, improved quality of life and are an important part of staying healthy for millions of Oregonians. But when prescription drug prices become too high our members are not able to pay for life-saving drugs that they desperately need. We urge your support for HB HB 2689, 2680, 2679, 2658 and 2690.

Thank you,

Felisa Hagins
Political Director
SEIU Local 49