



## **Testimony in Support of Prescription Drug Reform**

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Chair Greenlick and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association in support of prescription drug reform, particularly through greater transparency in advertisements and by requiring that pharmacists substitute lower cost generics or biologics that achieve the same outcome for patient health.

The Oregon Nurses Association is Oregon's oldest and largest nursing union and professional association and nurses across practice setting and location too often see their patients – and their own families -- struggle with the cost of prescription drugs.

In Oregon under the legislature's leadership, we've been engaged in a continuing process of reshaping our health care system to deliver improved outcomes, enhanced quality of care and reduced costs. However, the growing cost of prescription drugs is burdening public and private health care budgets across the state. Unaffordable and unpredictable prescription drug prices impact everyone.

In particular, brand name drug prices have grown up to five times faster than the annual growth for Medicaid and represent the highest instances of cost inflation. Specialty drugs have increased even more. Similarly, cities, counties, school districts and public safety budgets are feeling the squeeze of skyrocketing price increases for older drugs that have been on the market for years, as well as new high-priced specialty drugs like those for Hepatitis C.

Currently, pharmacists may substitute a generic or biosimilars, however too often, patients are not aware that there is an alternative and unknowingly pay hundreds of dollars more. House Bills 2753 (generics), 2754 (biologics) and 2755 (generics and biologics) work to address this by requiring that pharmacists substitute the lower cost drug (with some sideboards to ensure that the health care provider has made sure this is safe for the patient where necessary).

ONA also supports the efforts made in HB 2961 for drug companies to disclose the wholesale price of a drug, allowing patients to make more informed purchases and disincentivize price increases in Oregon.

These bills represent an important step toward addressing high drug prices in our state. This is part of a comprehensive policy approach that will provide more immediate and real protection so that patients may be able to access the prescriptions they need without significant financial hardship – we urge your support for drug substitution bills, House Bills 2753, 2754 and 2755, and important transparency legislation in House Bill 2961.