



Statement on SB 698

To: Senate Health Care Committee

From: The Oregon Pharmacy Coalition

The Oregon Pharmacy Coalition has concerns about SB 698 which would require the labeling of prescription drugs in both English and in a language that the patient can read and understand if the patient is of limited English proficiency.

The Oregon Pharmacy Coalition supports the goal of SB 698 and *voluntary* measures to provide instructions on prescription drug container labels to ensure the LEP patients are provided with the information needed to take their medications safely as directed.

As written though, SB 698 would mandate those services and these services are not without cost. Translation software increases the fixed costs of pharmacies without a corresponding increase in payment. Some pharmacy systems may need to be upgraded which takes time and budget planning. Pharmacies would not be reimbursed for these costs by insurers or Pharmacy Benefit Managers and already operate on very narrow if not negative margins. Any mandate of fixed additional expenses threatens the ability of a pharmacy to even exist to serve the public. Independent pharmacies are an endangered species in Oregon and mandated additional costs could make them extinct.

Further, pharmacies would be required to evaluate a patient's language skills to determine who requires translation services and provide labels in both English and in the other needed language. This will require additional training as pharmacists will have legal liability if they fail to accurately evaluate a patient's language skills.

In summary, we feel this service should be voluntary, but if mandated, then considerations should be given toward ensuring pharmacies and, in particular, small outlets do not bare an additional financial burden and that sufficient time is given to comply.