



## Testimony in support of HB 3273

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Chair Salinas and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of HB 3273 to implement a drug take-back program in Oregon. The Oregon Nurses Association is proud to represent over 15,000 nurses, working in settings from large hospitals to small local clinics, corrections, school-based health centers and community-based public health. Across the board, Oregon's nurses are keenly aware of the dangers of drug abuse and the opioid epidemic that is sweeping the nation. As a state, we should do everything we can to limit drug abuse, promote public health by ensuring our water is uncontaminated, and keep addictive prescription drugs out of the hands of Oregonians, particularly minors. This is why ONA supports HB 3273 to establish a statewide prescription drug take-back program.

Implementing a safe and accessible way for Oregonians to dispose of their unused prescription drugs is key to successfully limiting exposure and addiction. Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the US, with 20,101 overdose deaths caused by prescription pain relievers.<sup>1</sup> In 2012 alone, 259 million prescriptions were written for opioids -- more than enough to give every American adult their own bottle of opioid pills.<sup>2</sup>

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, over 75% of people who become dependent on opioids report that they first started using these drugs with pills they received from a friend or family member. Safely disposing unused medications can prevent accidental poisonings, intentional misuse, and the potential for addiction.

The health care costs of drug abuse and opioid overdose is far too high to not support ways to enable the safe and accessible disposal of prescription drugs. Based on calculations from Washington, a drug take-back program in Oregon is expected to cost just 0.07% of the \$4.64 billion in prescription and over-the-counter drug sales in Oregon every year. Further, it would ultimately save money for the consumer and the state in the long-run. Every day, more than 1,000 people are treated with costly emergency room care for misusing prescription opioids, and more than 40 people die from prescription opioid overdoses.<sup>3</sup>

There is too much at stake in the opioid epidemic in Oregon to not make an investment in keeping prescription drugs out of the hands of minors. ONA urges your support of HB 3273 to implement a comprehensive drug take-back program in Oregon.

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<sup>1</sup> Rudd RA, Seth P, David F, Scholl L. Increases in Drug and Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths — United States, 2010–2015. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm655051e1>

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). Opioid Painkiller Prescribing, Where You Live Makes a Difference. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/opioid-prescribing/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/rxawareness/pdf/Overview-Rx-Awareness-Resources.pdf>