

Chair Salinas and members of the committee,

Good afternoon, my name is Alex Hassen and I am a volunteer advocate from Portland working with this incredible team of folks on supporting SB 698. The team working on SB 698 has spent the last 2 years in the field researching and speaking to pharmacists, LEP patients, pharmacy software specialists, medication translation companies, and many others, to ensure proper implementation of SB 698 would be possible. Furthermore, as Representative Alonso-Leon indicated, we have been working with the Board of Pharmacy to create a bill that not only does the right thing but is also **doable**.

As you know, SB 698 would require pharmacies in Oregon to provide prescription container labels in both English and a readable language for LEP patients. The bill requires a minimum of 14 languages to be available **upon request** at pharmacies in Oregon. Those 14 languages will be determined by the Board of Pharmacy in consultation with Oregon Health Authority, with consideration of specific community needs and the availability of prescription label translations in those languages. As the Board said in their testimony, “Allowing the Board of Pharmacy to adopt rules to tailor the specific languages to the populations of various Oregon communities and revising the rules as language translation and pharmacy computer technology advances will provide the flexibility necessary for successful implementation” of SB 698.

As I mentioned, we have consulted with pharmacy software specialists and translation service providers to ensure that multiple software options capable of providing 14 languages are readily available to pharmacies of all sizes, and at a cost that will not unduly burden the pharmacy. We have verified that this is the case through market research. For example, one of the companies surveyed is already capable of integrating with Multnomah County Health Department’s new software system, and this company offers upwards of 17 languages for prescription label translations.

The quoted cost for 14 languages from one of these software vendors is \$70/month. Another company has quoted 14 languages for \$900/year. Yet, another option – **independent** of software compatibility – is a medication language translation bank, which allows pharmacies to purchase 100 of the most common prescription directions in one language for a one-time payment of \$250.

Furthermore, as the Board of Pharmacy said in their testimony, “The Oregon Board can adopt rules based on a minimum standard achievable with current technology and then could modify the rule as technology advances.”

SB 698 requires dual translated labels (meaning that both the English and the translated directions are on the label) so that both the LEP patient AND their pharmacist, caregiver or EMT can understand the medication directions. We have also researched the companies that create the actual physical label to make sure that a dual label will fit on the bottle.

1. From speaking to pharmacists who currently provide dual translated labels, we know that both English and the translated directions will fit on a normal sized bottle and label in most situations.
2. However, we have found several options to address uncommon situations where extra room is needed. For example, a common practice that already exists among pharmacists who want to include longer directions on a bottle is called “flagging”. Here is a sample of a flagged label (HOLD UP BOTTLE). The pharmacist prints out the original label with the English directions and puts it on the bottle. Then they simply print a second label containing the translated directions, fold it in half and stick it to the same bottle.
3. In situations where the English directions would not be on the label anyway, but would instead be on a supplemental document, as in the case of complex instructions, the translation is permitted to go on the supplemental document.
 - a. The intent is that if the directions would go on the bottle in English, they must go on the bottle in the translation. The Board of Pharmacy will oversee these logistical requirements, as it is their specialty.

All translation systems we have reviewed utilize multi-step vetting processes with native speakers to guarantee the accuracy of the translation. An example of one of these vetting processes is available in OLIS.

I want to leave you with two quotes selected from some of the written testimonies provided by pharmacists in support of SB 698:

“The process for changing the printed language is quite simple and only requires a few clicks.” – Tahlia Aarstad, PharmD, Klamath Falls

“SB 698 is a vital step towards providing safe and appropriate care [...] This bill will help prevent accidental misuse of prescription medications that all too often lead to severe health risk, adverse effects, and even death.” – Brian L. Michael, PharmD, Klamath Falls

Thank you for your time today. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.