



Testimony in Support of HB 2696

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Chair Salinas and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association in support of establishing a Statewide Prescription Drug Affordability Board.

The Oregon Nurses Association is Oregon's oldest and largest nursing union and professional association and is proud to represent over 15,000 registered nurses who work in almost every health care setting -- from large hospitals to small local clinics, from corrections to school-based health centers and in community-based public health. In every setting, nurses too often see their patients – and their own families -- struggle with the cost of prescription drugs.

Too often, Oregon's patients cannot afford their medications and are forced to take reduced dosages, cut pills in half or make hard choices between medicine, rent, or food for themselves and their families. And Oregon companies—both small and large—cannot keep pace with unsustainable growth in prescription drug prices, being forced to choose plans for their employees with higher out-of-pocket maximums and far fewer benefits. Ultimately, high drug prices raise costs for everyone—they increase premiums and increase the costs the state pays for Medicaid and Medicare.

That's why ONA has encouraged the legislature to use every tool available to make prescription drugs affordable and reliably accessible for all Oregonians. One significant and common-sense tool we hope the legislature will continue to consider is to establish statewide upper payment limits through a Prescription Drug Affordability Board as outlined in HB 2696.

This proposal is one of the few ways that Oregon could functionally get lower costs for consumers statewide and ensure that costs are not unduly shifted unto the patient. Price control commissioners are a tested concept that works well in other industries by regulating consumer costs for products that are essential to health and safety – like affordable clean drinking water. Like clean water, life-saving drugs are not a commodity or a luxury, they are a public good and their prices should be subject to a pragmatic and democratic process that we know works.

By duplicating this type of oversight board for high-cost prescription drugs, it would establish a base level of fairness and democracy in the process and bolster patient trust by soliciting input from patients, providers, and health plans through a review process. We regulate other public goods and it's time that our Oregon also do this for prescription drugs.

Ultimately, high cost prescription drugs effect nearly every Oregonian – including the health care providers who too often see their patients suffer because they can't afford the medication they need to survive. HB 2696 is a tested and common-sense tool in addressing this problem which is why we hope you will seriously consider establishing a Statewide Prescription Drug Affordability Board in the interim and into the next legislative session.