



February 25, 2021

TO: House Health Care Committee
FR: Maribeth Guarino, Health Care Advocate, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)
RE: In Support of HB 2044 on the Drug Price Transparency Program

OSPIRG is a statewide, citizen-based, public interest organization representing thousands of Oregonians.

We support HB 2044 and its changes to the Prescription Drug Price Transparency Program. This program has been an instrumental source of information regarding drug pricing practices over the last two years, and the additions in this bill close information gaps to make the program more effective in providing accountability for prescription drug pricing.

Prescription drugs cost too much for Oregon consumers. Of American adults and seniors who take prescription drugs, one in four reported that it is "difficult" to afford their medication, while three in ten reported not filling a prescription due to the cost. Patient assistance programs are created to help financially needy patients purchase necessary medications and supplies, but when so many people struggle to afford prescriptions, it is critical that their costs are transparent. In fact, if there was ever a consumer population that could benefit from transparency, it's patients who need help affording their life-altering medications.

The bill adds a requirement that pharmaceutical manufacturers report information about patient assistance programs for certain new prescription drugs. This information will help inform the broader drug price transparency program and provide data on affordability challenges and the aid that people need in order to use their prescriptions. Prescription drugs constitute a large portion of health care spending in Oregon. The additional information the bill permits the Drug Price Transparency program to collect will give a better picture of health care costs and conforms with the steps the legislature has taken to understand and limit the increasing cost of health care in recent years. Following the recommendations of the drug price transparency program based on their experience in analyzing the data for the last two years is the best way to ensure they have the tools they need to make informed recommendations through the program in the future.

When prescriptions are given by providers to treat illnesses like cancer and health problems like chronic pain, following their orders isn't a choice for a patient dealing with these problems; it's a necessity. Programs that help consumers afford life-saving medication are great, but that doesn't detract from the bigger picture that the transparency program is trying to address: the expense of prescription drugs and related consumer protections. Providing this data closes information gaps in the current program and will increase the program's efficacy in the future.