



March 25, 2020

Dear Chair Prusak, Co-Chairs Salinas and Hayden, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, we would like to share our support for HB 2958, which will provide greater access to HIV preventive medications like PrEP and PEP.

We support the recent work of the Public Health & Formulary Advisory Committee (PHFAC) that has started the process of adopting policy recommendations to allow pharmacists in Oregon to prescribe PrEP and PEP. HB 2958 is a necessary step to increasing access, as it will ensure these policies are as effective as possible. Passage of this bill will ensure Oregon is in alignment with national standards of care.

Medications like PEP and PrEP can prevent HIV infection altogether. Along with the development of life-saving antiretroviral drugs, ending HIV in Oregon is now a real possibility—but only for those who can afford the expense. People who need access to these life-saving medications cannot wait any longer.

Our organization can attest to the positive impacts of similar policies we have supported in past sessions. Legislation that granted pharmacist prescription authority for hormonal contraceptives has led to an increase in access to these critical medications, especially in populations that ensured the cost of consultations were covered, including Oregon's Medicaid population. Early research indicates the program has succeeded in increasing access to hormonal contraceptives in Oregon since the program began in 2016. The study, Pharmacists Expand Access to Reproductive Healthcare (or PEARL study), led by OSU professor and Medical Director of Oregon's Title X program, Maria I. Rodriguez, MD, MPH, found the following:

“One year after passage of this legislation, 63% of ZIP codes across the state of Oregon now have a pharmacist certified to prescribe hormonal contraception.”¹

“Overall, 10% of new oral or transdermal hormonal contraceptive prescriptions were written by pharmacists. We found that, among Oregon's Medicaid enrollees, a majority (73.8%) of patients who received hormonal contraception from a pharmacist were new contraceptive users.”²

¹ Anderson L, Hartung D, Middleton L, Rodriguez MI. Pharmacist provision of hormonal contraception in the Oregon Medicaid Population. *Obstet Gynecol* 2019;133

Rodriguez MI, Biel FM, Swartz JJ, Anderson L, Edelman AB. Association of Pharmacist Prescription of Hormonal Contraception With Unintended Pregnancies and Medicaid Costs. *Obstet Gynecol*, 2019;133

² Ibid.

The research also shows that there is room for improvement: Ensuring equitable reimbursement for services provided by pharmacists has been key to the uptake of the practice:

“Oregon is unique in that Medicaid has reimbursed for pharmacist time and contraceptives since policy inception. Pharmacists have rapidly become certified to prescribe contraception in Oregon.”³

“Ensuring equitable reimbursement for services provided by pharmacists has been key to the uptake of the practice. Data from California, where Medicaid has not reimbursed for pharmacists’ counseling and time, demonstrates low availability of services when reimbursement is not assured.”⁴

Passage of HB 2958 will ensure that life-saving medications like PrEP and PEP are covered, even at an out-of-network pharmacy. It will also improve upon previous policy, by ensuring pharmacists fees associated with patient consultations for prescribing medications like PrEP and PEP, as well as oral contraceptives, will be reimbursed by insurance companies.

We believe HB 2958 will eliminate barriers to care, expand reproductive freedom, and save lives. We respectfully ask for your support of this bill.

Thank you,

Christel Allen
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NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon

³ Anderson L, Hartung D, Middleton L, Rodriguez MI. Pharmacist provision of hormonal contraception in the Oregon Medicaid Population. *Obstet Gynecol* 2019;133

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⁴ Ibid.