

Submitter: Ashley Cooke
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB410

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and members of the committee, for the record, my name is Ashley Cooke and I am Certified Oregon Pharmacy Technician. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on SB 410.

I became a pharmacy technician in Oregon in 2005. At this time I was working on my bachelors degree at the University of Oregon, serving an internship with Congressman Peter DeFazio, and working as a cashier at a large retail chain. Since then, I have worked in numerous modalities of pharmacy such as retail, home infusion, and oncology. For the past 5 years I have been working in a local hospital, doing bedside medication review with patients who are going to be admitted. In the 18 years that I have worked as pharmacy technician I have grown passionate about the work we do, and enthusiastic about the potential of the profession.

When I became a pharmacy technician in 2005, national certification was not required in Oregon, I was trained on the job, and completed the months long pharmacy technician training course that was required through the retail chain where I worked. I was working in an environment where there was capacity to thoroughly train me. I had technician and pharmacist mentors, and constant guidance. In 2008 I took my national certification test, as required by the Oregon Board of Pharmacy. My three years of experience, on the job training, and rigorous study, set me up to pass the test with a high score. Those training environments that I just listed, that allowed me to safely learn the profession, do not exist today. Most pharmacies do not have the time or capacity to train individuals to be technicians. The training that is offered is brief and usually centers around learning the prescription processing system that particular pharmacy uses. Furthermore there is often high turnover in some pharmacy's and it is not uncommon for new technicians to be training new technicians.

The role of pharmacy technician carries a lot of responsibilities. It is not unusual for a technician to be asked to do something that is outside of their scope of practice. It is also not unusual for technicians to be working with agency or traveler pharmacists, that have never worked at that location, they don't know the workflows, the equipment, or the patients. It is technicians that are responsible for queuing up the work for the pharmacists, solving insurance problems, and ordering and putting away the drugs. We touch everything in the pharmacy, we often drive the workflow, and most importantly we free up the pharmacist, so they can perform their essential duties. It is for all of these reasons that it is crucial that technicians meet the standard that is set, by being nationally certified.

When you take the national certification exam, you are doing more than showing your level of knowledge, you are making a commitment to the work, as a profession. You are agreeing that there is a standard that needs to be met, to serve patients safely.

Right now, as with many professions, there is a shortage of pharmacy technicians. Many technicians are burnt out. We operate in an industry that wants us to deliver more, with less, and to do it faster. Our wages are often equal to cashiers, or food service workers, yet we are handling medications, compounding, mixing IV'S, and dealing with complicated insurance billing. How are you going to ensure a technician can do all of that safely?

I support this bill because I have seen how important it is to patient safety to require technicians to pass a competency standard.

Respect us, respect our profession, and keep patient safety your top priority.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge you to vote 'yes' for Senate Bill 410!