



May 8, 2023

To: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

From: Emerson Hamlin, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for SB 608A-2

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Emerson Hamlin. Thank you for considering this testimony in support of Senate Bill 608 A-2 on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is a nurses union and professional association representing over 16,000 health care workers and providers, including registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health, and county health departments across Oregon.

Oregonians are struggling to bear the weight of prescription drug costs. According to Altarum's Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey, just over a quarter of adults in Oregon cut pills in half, skipped doses, or did not fill a prescription due to cost.¹ Rationing or skipping medication puts patients at serious risk for worsening existing health conditions, developing additional complications, and requiring more costly care in the future.² Additionally, lack of access to care impacts providers. One nurse shared with me that her worries about patients not being able to afford the medication and additional care they needed kept her up at night. Her comment reflects our members' fundamental belief that everyone deserves to receive healthcare they need, regardless of their financial circumstances.

SB 608 A, with the -A2 amendment, will make life-saving medications affordable for more community members. By adjusting insurers' limitations on co-pay assistance, specifically in situations where medication does not have a generic equivalent, or when insurers have already given prior authorization, we will be ensuring that more Oregonians will be able to get the medication they need without sacrificing their ability pay rent, childcare, or keep food on the table. ONA urges the adoption of the -A2 amendment, and a yes vote on SB 608 A. Thank you.

¹Data Brief No. 91: *Oregon Residents Struggle to Afford High Healthcare Costs; COVID Fears Add to Support for a Range of Government Solutions Across Party Lines*. Altarum: Healthcare Value Hub. (2021, June).

<https://www.healthcarevaluehub.org/advocate-resources/publications/oregon-residents-struggle-afford-high-healthcare-costs-covid-fears-add-support-range-government-solutions-across-party-lines>

² Penn State Health. *The Medical Minute: Missing Medication Doses Can Bring Serious Consequences*. Newswise: Penn State Health. (2020, February 5). <https://www.newswise.com/articles/the-medical-minute-missing-medication-doses-can-bring-serious-consequences>



Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin