

Dear Chair Patterson, members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Gordana Nichols, and I testify to **oppose** HB3258.

This legislative session, 3 bills were introduced to address the “gaps” in Oregon PDM program based on the 2018 Secretary of State Audit Division report.

As introduced, the last bill still considered, HB3258, proposed reporting schedule V controlled substances to PDMP. This would ensure compliance with federal regulations and make Oregon eligible for federal grants, and as such was not necessarily an issue.

However, the bill was later amended to include the proposals from SB559, a bill that would require veterinarians to report prescribed medications to PDMP. SB559 did not pass.

This brings us back to the information presented in the audit report these bills were based on, most of it being **outdated, inaccurate and flawed**. Consequently, **HB3258 should be considered flawed as well**.

My detailed analysis can be found in SB559 testimonies, so here are just a few points worth repeating.

Audit report recounted the substance abuse in Oregon, named prescription drugs as a source of addiction, stated that owners deliberately harm their pets to obtain medication and 21 states require reporting veterinary prescriptions.

Similar statements were repeated by the bill sponsors and supporters, as notable in the following examples, taken from the testimonies:

Rep. Smith:

*“There is a real need for the State of Oregon to tackle the opioid crisis by reducing the amount of prescription drugs that make it to the street.”*

Rep. Levy:

*“Prescription painkillers serve as an easy introduction to the world of addiction and substance abuse. It is all too common that some people start taking prescription painkillers for a legitimate medical condition and end up becoming addicted. This addiction leads towards stronger and stronger substances to scratch the itch of addiction.”*

Rep. Sanchez:

*“Record number of Oregonians continue to die from opioid addictions – addictions often fueled by legally prescribed drugs...” “HB3258 will prevent overdoses”*

**NONE is accurate.**

The main source of overdoses and deaths, as plethora of information shows, are caused by illicit drugs, not those prescribed. PDMP reporting does **nothing** to stop that.

According to studies, only a very small percent of patients on long-term opioids gets addicted – 1-8%. This means that over 90% of patients benefit from their medications and are **not** addicts.

We know that PDMP, a tool that can assist doctors, has also been used **against patients** that use prescribed controlled substances, especially when used in conjunction with a decision module Narxcare. Patients were stigmatized, denied care, had their medication reduced, or outright abandoned. We have a crisis within crisis – a collateral damage of “war on drugs”.

Sadly, Oregon is a state that initiated forced taper of patients stable on pain medication, despite the caution of recognized professionals not to do so. Following the advisement of biased committees, Oregon adopted draconian measures to reduce prescriptions for pain medications, in turn leaving hundreds of patients with nowhere to turn to for pain relief.

On one hand we have Measure 110 that decriminalized most substances, on the other hand we have legitimate patients compliant with “pain contracts”, submitted to random pill counts, UAs, any other requirements, treated like criminals.

This bill will only make the crisis pain patients are facing worse. Adding more regulatory reporting will not solve the overdose crisis, it will only harm innocent people that need help for themselves and their pets.

While more and more states are introducing measures to protect patients and relax PDMP requirements (the latest one SB144 just passed in Colorado), Oregon is going in the opposite direction. Why? Because an old audit ridden with errors demands it.

A recent joint statement of Senate and House leaders says clearly that **legislators depend on the work of the Audits Division for vital information on public policy.**

Please look at the audit. Assess the accuracy of the information. Look at the crisis created for people in pain. Vote no on this bill.