

Submitter: Devon Lawson-McCourt  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure: SB1506

To the Esteemed Members of the Senate Committee On Health Care,

In support of Senate Bill 1506, I write to you not just as an advocate for progressive principles, but as a proponent of public health, social equity, and community empowerment. At the heart of progressivism is the belief in collective responsibility and action for the common good. SB 1506 embodies these principles by ensuring that healthcare, particularly the testing and treatment of viral infections, is accessible and equitable across all segments of our population.

Pharmacists are among the most accessible healthcare professionals in our communities. They serve not just as dispensers of medication, but as trusted medical advisors, especially in underserved and rural areas where doctors and hospitals may not be readily available. By empowering pharmacists with the authority to test for and treat viral infections, SB 1506 significantly expands the public's access to essential healthcare services. This move democratizes healthcare by taking it out of the exclusive realm of medical facilities and into our local pharmacies, thereby reducing barriers to care that many face due to geographic, economic, or systemic reasons.

Furthermore, the requirement for the Oregon Health Authority's medical assistance program to reimburse pharmacists for these services is a critical step towards a more equitable healthcare system. It recognizes the value of pharmacists' work, ensures that they are fairly compensated, and, most importantly, it places the burden of payment on a public entity rather than on the individual seeking care. This is a clear reflection of a society that prioritizes public health over profit, ensuring that no one is denied access to vital healthcare services because of their financial situation.

The sunset clause, ending on June 30, 2026, provides a timeframe to assess the effectiveness and impact of this policy. It is a prudent measure that allows for evaluation and adjustments as needed, ensuring that the policy remains responsive to the needs of Oregonians. However, it is my hope that the success of this program will lead to its extension and eventual permanence, setting a precedent for how healthcare can be more accessible and equitable for all.

SB 1506 is a step towards a healthcare system that aligns with the values of equity, community care, and the common good. It represents an acknowledgment that healthcare should not be a privilege confined to those who can afford it or live in the right area, but a right available to all, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location. By supporting this bill, we take a stand for a more just and

equitable society where the health of the community is a collective responsibility and priority.

In solidarity and with great hope for the future,

Devon Lawson-McCourt