

Testimony in Support of SB 1548A
Dr. Jill Pearson – Pediatrician, Silverton, Oregon
House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade

Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chairs Isadore and Skarlatos, and members of the Committee

My name is Dr. Jill Pearson. I am a board-certified pediatrician with more than 25 years of experience caring for children in Oregon, including time as the medical director of the inpatient pediatric hospitalist group at Salem Hospital. I am also a small business owner, so I understand firsthand the weight of regulatory requirements and the importance of economic stability.

Senate Bill 1548A, the Safer Marijuana Act, is a common-sense, bipartisan measure to reduce marijuana poisonings in Oregon’s children and protect youth brain health.

Oregon is seeing a rise in THC exposures, especially among toddlers who mistake high-potency edibles for candy. SB 1548A limits each edible to a single 10-milligram serving and requires each serving to be individually wrapped, while still allowing up to 100 milligrams per package. This bill does not change the requirement for child-resistant packaging – it simply adds a critical, proven layer of prevention.

This approach is modeled after Washington, where similar packaging and serving standards reduced pediatric hospitalizations and poisonings.

Importantly, this bill does **not** reduce the total THC allowed per package, does **not** eliminate products, and does **not** prevent adults from purchasing the products they choose. It simply standardizes serving size and packaging to prevent accidental overdoses.

SB 1548A is about safer packaging, safer dosing, and safer kids.

I respect that this committee is focused on supporting small businesses and protecting jobs for Oregonians. I know many of you are also parents or grandparents. I am here today wearing two hats (physician and parent) to share what we are seeing with children and cannabis edibles.

As a pediatric hospitalist, I cared for toddlers requiring hospitalization after accidentally ingesting cannabis edibles that looked like candy or baked goods. These were not cases of neglect. These patients were typical, curious young children encountering high-potency, multi-dose products that made rapid overconsumption easy. These hospitalizations were frightening, traumatic, and entirely preventable.

Across Oregon, emergency departments are seeing increasing adolescent visits related to high-potency cannabis exposure, including severe anxiety, psychosis, suicidality, and cannabis hyperemesis syndrome. Just weeks ago, a colleague in southern Oregon raised concerns about an increase in sudden, unexpected infant sleep-related deaths associated with parental cannabis use.

In the Salem-Keizer School District, our state’s second largest, my school nurse colleagues report adolescent cannabis use on campuses as a daily occurrence, prompting the development of formal response protocols. This mirrors what healthcare has done since cannabis legalization, in creating new diagnostic codes specifically for cannabis-related adverse effects. **These responses by education and healthcare signal the scope of the issue.**

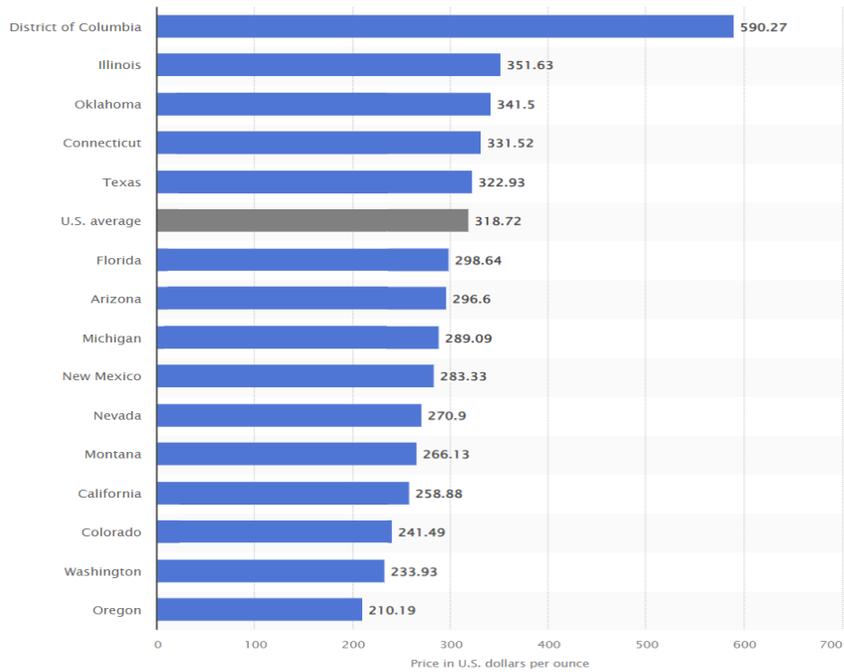
Edibles are easy to conceal, easy to share, and easy to overconsume.

SB 1548 does not ban products or restrict adult access. It establishes **two targeted safety standards**: limiting individual edible servings to 10 milligrams and requiring single-dose packaging.

As a business owner, I appreciate concerns about cost. But reasonable, evidence-based safety standards strengthen markets over time. Oregon’s cannabis prices remain among the lowest in the nation (see below), and its taxation is relatively low compared to other states. These modest packaging adjustments are unlikely to destabilize our mature industry but may **prevent emergency visits to our already overflowing ERs, reduce overdose hospitalizations, and protect fragile, developing brains.**

The opposition claims cannabis prices are comparable to those in other states, and price matters to Oregonians. I want to point out that Oregon has the lowest prices in the nation, according to Statista.com

https://www.statista.com/statistics/589688/medical-marijuana-prices-by-state/?srsltid=AfmBOopnxFsYRNMJELx82nj-1mwbWfWINqb0WhGyyN121_8q-Hc1LkPr



Healthy children and stable families are not separate from economic development. They are the foundation of it. As physicians, our responsibility is to prevent harm before it happens — not simply treat the aftermath.

I respectfully urge your support of SB 1548A as a common-sense step to prevent harm before it happens.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today, as an advocate for Oregon's children.

Jill Pearson, MD FAAP