

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 409 and House Bill 2689

I urge you to vote for and work with your colleagues to pass HB 2689 and SB 409 so that Oregon can lower the cost of medications by purchasing medications from Canada. There are many stories of individuals who are unable to pay for necessary medications because the price is just too high. I know these stories from firsthand experiences. I am a retired healthcare professional and have worked in community clinics with poor patients for my entire career—on skid row, with farmworkers in California and here in Oregon, and in urban practices in Los Angeles and Portland.

Of course, the fact that individual Oregonians, both insured and uninsured, are unable to pay the often times exorbitant price of medications is reason enough to pass this legislation.

However, the point I want to make is that THE COST OF HEALTH CARE IN OUR STATE (AND COUNTRY) IS NOT SUSTAINABLE AND THE OUTRAGEOUS AND UNNECESSARY PRICES OF MEDICATIONS IS A SIGNIFICANT DRIVER OF THAT OUT OF CONTROL COST. There is no reason that medications should cost more in the USA than they do in all the other first world countries. The pharmaceutical industry says that the high prices are needed so they can do research and development and because we have a higher standard of safety in this country. This makes no sense. If they can sell the medications for a price in Europe or Canada, they can sell it for that price in the USA and certainly the medications sold to Europe and Canada are as safely manufactured, packaged and shipped as the medications they sell to the USA. The reason prices are so high is profit at all levels of the medication game--lobbying, manufacturing, marketing. The pharmaceutical companies have some of the highest profit margins of any companies. They charge outrageous prices because they can.

It is a fact that many of the health care dollars in Oregon, both private and public, are used to purchase medications. This long-lived system of charging outrageous prices that are paid by individuals or by health care premiums or by government taxes is not a system that we have to accept. Actually, we cannot accept it because the consequences for the sustainability of our health care system are too severe.

Pass HB 2689 and SB 409 so that Oregonians can at least have an option not to pay the crazy high prices for medications. Make it so we can purchase the same medications from Canada for less.

Please let me know how you and your staff are working to pass these bills.

Thank you,

Catherine Bax, Physician Assistant, retired

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