

NWABR

Northwest Association for Biomedical Research

January 25, 2019

State Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson
State Senator Dennis Linthicum
Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Vice-Chair Linthicum:

I am writing to express concern about some of the potential risks associated with a proposal to allow for the importation of drugs into the tightly-regulated U.S. drug market.

The genesis of our concern is the need for the public to be able to trust the drugs that they use and rely on and the potential for this trust to be eroded as a result of the significantly reduced oversight of the drug manufacture/distribution pipeline that exists in Canada.

The U.S. has the most closely regulated prescription drug supply chain in the world, tracing drugs from the manufacturer through every step of the supply chain to the consumer. US pharmaceutical companies are required to verify the safety and authenticity of each pill sold at the counter. Canada has no such national "track-and-trace" system. In fact, Canada has both its own counterfeiting problem as well as a trans-shipping problem, which makes it the stopover country of choice for prescription drug smugglers. U.S. consumers can import drugs *from* Canada, but they cannot know if those drugs were simply traveling *through* Canada from another country. This is why every Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – both Democrat and Republican – has been unable to certify the safety of drugs being imported from Canada.

Oregon is not immune to the effects of counterfeit drugs. Four times in just the last two years, authorities in Portland and Salem seized counterfeit oxycodone pills laced with fentanyl and warned that hundreds of such pills were circulating in the area. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned 14 medical practices in Oregon to stop buying drugs from CanadaDrugs.com, a licensed Canadian pharmaceutical wholesaler, which was later fined \$34 million for selling fake cancer medication into the U.S.

We understand and support discussions about increasing patient access to affordable medication. We are just not sure that the loosening of importation controls achieves this end.

We urge the committee to carefully weigh the costs and benefits of importation when there are clearly better alternatives to achieving our shared objective of access to affordable medicine.

Yours sincerely



Ken Gordon
Executive Director