

TO: Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
CC: Members of the Health Care Committee



RE: SB 150

There are few professionals who are more cognizant of the dangerous, unfettered access to opioids and its impact on patients than pharmacists. Whether in an institutional health-system setting or in a retail pharmacy, the act of delivering medications and collecting payment is one that pharmacists carry out every day. With their unique position, pharmacists are acutely aware of the need to address issues related to unwanted access to medications.

The Oregon Pharmacy Coalition is very concerned about the opioid crises and the detrimental effect it is having on the health and wellbeing of Oregonians. We also support innovation in concepts to address this problem. The idea of securing controlled substances from pilfering and diversion is a sound idea, and we encourage all our patients to store controlled substances in a safe place during our consultation with patients. Many pharmacies choose to offer small safes or other lockboxes to store all their medications, singling out individual vials is more expensive and less effective.

SB 150 is administratively burdensome, unnecessarily costly, inappropriate for many pharmacy practice settings, and all the while offering questionable benefits in the war on prescription drug abuse. We are opposed to mandates to this degree that would require every pharmacy in this state to purchase products that have thus far been largely rejected in the marketplace – especially involving products that are not nearly as effective as they purport to be.

We have several questions regarding the proposed locking vials. How often do patients forget their combinations? Should a pharmacist tell the patient or caregiver the combination over the phone? How long does it take to educate patients on the vial? Does this extend to compliance packaging, where medications are individually split into single dose blister packs? How easy is it to defeat the locking mechanism?

We are concerned that the cost of these vials (from 1-10 dollars a vial) would increase the already high cost of prescriptions for controlled substances. Many patients struggle to afford the medication, let alone an expensive bottle. Approximately 25% of all prescriptions are for controlled substances. This increased expense would also be passed along to the Medicaid patients and subsequently to the State of Oregon.

In summary, this mandate would have questionable effects on opioid use, and set a bad precedent of requiring pharmacies to purchase particular products and promote them to patients. It would place an administrative burden on the pharmacy and increase the cost of prescription medications.

Thank you for your time and consideration on the matter. *Should you have any questions or comments about the Oregon Pharmacy Coalition position, please contact Bill Cross at bill@wvcross.com or Niki Terzieff at niki@leadingedgepublicaffairs.com.*