



To:

Senate Committee on Health Care
shc.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

March 6, 2019

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Senate Health Care Committee:

On behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), I'm writing to express our **support for SB 698, the Prescription Drug Labeling Bill**. This bill requires pharmacists to label prescription drugs in languages other than English for patients who have limited English proficiency. As a statewide, grassroots organization, we work with Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across the state of Oregon to advance social justice. We work very closely in the Jade District of Portland to provide in-language advocacy for Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants. We believe *all* individuals deserve the right to accessible, high-quality healthcare.

According to the 2010 Census, 6.1% of Oregon's population, over 200,000 individuals, were LEP (limited English proficient). Moreover, Asian and Pacific Island language speakers were shown to possess the highest rate of LEP at 49.3%. We suspect this number to greatly rise with the upcoming 2020 Census, reflecting a growing need in the community. Yet despite these statistics, under current regulations, pharmacies are not required to provide prescription labels in any language other than English. We assert that the lack of translated labelling denies those who are LEP, many of whom are members of our community, the basic right to health and safety.

Studies show that the rate of medication errors is twice as high for LEP patients as for English speakers. Errors like these can lead to significant financial and personal distress on patients, increase office and emergency departments visits for adverse drug reactions, and create distrust and confusion around the healthcare system. This distress affects the medical system by requiring hospitals, clinics, and providers to allocate time and resources to emergencies that are easily preventable.

We believe this bill would help bring Oregon one step closer to equitable access for all in healthcare. Something so vital as correct prescription drug use should not be left to ambiguity or confusion when taking life-sustaining medicine. Every patient deserves to understand what medicines they are putting in their body and how to properly use it.



We thank you for your time and consideration, and urge the House Committee on Health Care to vote in support of SB 698.

Sincerely,
Ivy Major-McDowall
Legislative Coordinator
APANO