

## Oral testimony in support of SB 698: History and Introduction

Chair Salinas and Members of the Committee,

I would first like to say thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of Senate Bill 698, promoting safe medication use by requiring that prescription containers have labels translated into a language that people can read.

I am Kristen Beiers-Jones. I teach nursing and other health professional students through a statewide Interprofessional Care Access Network program whereby the students manage a caseload of patients in the community, visiting them each week at their homes. The focus of my practice is with immigrant and refugee patients and we pay particular attention to the social determinants that impact people's health. My goal is to not just teach students to care for individuals, but to care for populations. They are to ask--how can we improve the health and well being of the communities we are working within? This bill is a result of asking that question.

We noticed that nearly 75% of our patients were not taking the medications as the provider prescribed. As we investigated, we realized that much of it was due to people not being able to read their pill bottles, 100% of which were English labels.

One of our clients was an Iraqi refugee whose 5 children had asthma which she described as developing after exposure to a bomb in Baghdad. They had been in and out of the ER and one had been hospitalized due to asthma exacerbation. In our initial intake visit we realized that she had mixed up the kids medications and inhalers. This is a highly educated woman who spoke several languages , just not English. If this pharmacy was following federal laws and had best practices, an Arabic interpreter had been used when she picked up her children's medications. But imagine her getting home with a bag of medications with labels she could not read and trying to recall what the pharmacist had told her. You can imagine her horror when she realized her error in giving the children the wrong medicines.

This case inspired us to look deeper into this issue. We found that New York and California both have laws mandating that prescription containers have translated labels. We decided that not only should Oregon do the same, but we should do better. We researched the medical literature and spoke to experts at the New York Academy of Medicine. We interviewed many patients, providers and pharmacists, some you will hear from today. We accompanied our patients to pharmacies where to our alarm often an interpreter was not called, even though this is a violation of the patients' civil right and the Affordable Care Act. We discovered that chain pharmacies already have software to translate into 14 languages, they just don't do it in Oregon. We spent much time working with translation software companies to better understand translation software. Most importantly, we gathered stakeholders who believed that legislation was needed.

The one-pager that you have a copy of will show you organizations that have endorsed this. You will note health organizations who are concerned about this **medical safety issue** like Oregon Nurses Association, Oregon Public Health, Oregon Academy of Family Physicians, Cascade Aids Project. You will note organizations who are particularly advocating for **health equity and social justice** such as the Oregon Health Equity Alliance, Building power for Communities of Color, Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good, APANO, IRCO and Oregon Latino Health Coalition. And you will note the endorsement of 2 CCOs who recognize **the cost savings** inherent in people not being hospitalized for preventable

medical errors. SO we are here today with the hope that you will pass Senate Bill 698. Several of my students and member of our team are here to testify with more details about the impact of this legislation. Thank you for your time and service.

AllCare Health CCO, Inc.  
Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon  
Building Power for Communities of Color  
CareOregon  
Cascade AIDS Project  
Catholic Charities  
Coalition of Community Health Centers  
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization  
McKenzie Pediatrics  
Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good  
Nurses for Single Payer  
Oregon Academy of Family Physicians  
Oregon Health Equity Alliance  
Oregon Latino Health Coalition  
Oregon Nurses Association  
Oregon Psychological Association  
Oregon Public Health Association  
Oregon Society of Physician Assistants  
PacificSource CCO  
Passport to Languages, Inc.  
Portland Meet Portland  
SO Health-E Coalition  
Somali American Council of Oregon