



March 22, 2021

TO: Senate Committee on Health Care
FR: Maribeth Guarino, Health Care Advocate, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG)
RE: In Support of SB 844, Prescription Drug Affordability Board

OSPIRG is a statewide, citizen-based, public interest organization representing thousands of Oregonians.

OSPIRG supports SB 844.

One of the biggest takeaways from the Prescription Drug Price Transparency program and the resulting reports these last two years is that prescriptions still cost too much. The top five most expensive brand name prescriptions in 2020 were between \$23,000-43,000.¹

As a consumer advocacy organization, OSPIRG hears from citizens across the state about the high cost of their prescriptions. One young woman shared that her mother's prescriptions cost more than she is receiving each month through social security, which leaves no money to live on. She told us, "It is so ridiculous to have Medicare part B and still not be able to afford all of the medicines she needs to live." Another woman with MS told us that her monthly bill for prescriptions alone is over \$8,000. Her insurance covers some of it, but her husband is retiring and soon they won't have the same coverage. That \$8,000 bill is a big concern for them.

Prescription drugs can be life-changing for those that need them. Put another way, prescription drugs directly affect the health and wellbeing of the patients who are prescribed them. When retail prescription drug spending accounts for approximately 11% of total health expenditures in Oregon and has increased an average of 7.2% annually from 1991 to 2014, that cost directly affects the health outcomes of those prescribed life-saving medication.²

In the last few years, Oregon has taken steps to increase transparency and lower health care costs, but there is more to be done. Lowering prescription drug prices has to be a part of those efforts, and so I urge you to support SB 844.

¹ Page 38 and 39 of the [Oregon Drug Price Transparency Program Annual Report of 2020](#).

² Page 14 of the [Oregon Drug Price Transparency Program Annual Report of 2020](#).