



**Date:** March 22, 2021  
**To:** Senate Health Care Committee, Chair Patterson and Members  
**From:** Jared Mason-Gere, OEA Government Relations  
**RE:** *SB 844 [Oregon Prescription Drug Affordability Board]*

My name is Jared Mason-Gere and I am the Government Relations Consultant with the Oregon Education Association (OEA) – a union that represents about 41,000 educators working in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 public schools and community colleges. OEA’s membership includes licensed teachers and specialists, classified/education support professionals (ESPs), community college faculty, retired educators, and student members.

At OEA, we believe that strong health care benefits make staying in the profession possible for so many educators. That’s why we work constantly to negotiate the best health care coverage for our members and work to beat back attacks on their benefits. One thing we can’t negotiate is the price of their prescription drugs. That is why I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the OEA and our members to show our support for SB 844, to create an Oregon Prescription Drug Affordability Board.

The fact is, prescription drugs work only when people can afford them. Unfortunately, pharmaceutical companies have, instead of working to reduce the price of their drugs, used a lack of regulation to their advantage. Furthermore, they claim they are not part of the problem – all while they spend more on costly and flashy advertising than on the research and development critical to developing new drugs. Adding to that, the federal government has failed to keep the pharmaceutical industry in check, leaving working Oregonians to bear the brunt of skyrocketing costs.

The OEA and our members are asking Oregon to step in to stand up for working Oregonians. The legislature can accomplish this by passing SB 844 and creating a Prescription Drug Affordability Board. Oregon will join other states that have put consumers first and taken similar steps to limit how much people pay for certain medications, once this Board is established. SB 844 acknowledges that prescription medications are vital to Oregonians’ health, safety, and quality of life.

As our members are being asked to return to their buildings, let’s give them one less thing to worry about by controlling the dramatic rise in prescription drug prices. You can do this by moving SB 844 to the floor with a “do pass” recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration.