

March 30, 2021

To: House Committee on Rules

From: M.L. Mercer

RE: Support for HB 3343

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Holvey,

For the record, my name is Lee Mercer. I am a retired business owner and resident of Silverton. I am submitting this written testimony in support of HB 3343. I am speaking for myself and not on behalf of any organizations with which I am affiliated.

I, and others I work with, have been advocating for many years for a universal healthcare system in Oregon. We were encouraged when the 2019 legislature created a [Joint Task Force on Universal Healthcare](#) which is currently designing a healthcare system which would guarantee affordable healthcare for all.

But recently I learned that most health committee members receive substantial donations from corporations and organizations in the "medical industrial complex." I began to wonder if these dollars might influence them to put the brakes on, in terms of taking on major health care reform.

Fortunately, in Oregon, we have the [ORESTAR system](#), on which candidates must report all their donations. To see what medical groups have donated to the Senate and House Committees on Healthcare, I scanned through donations back through a month before the November elections (Oct 1, 2020). In looking at ORESTAR, I also noticed that House and Senate leadership, gets generous donations from the health industry, so added the top 4 leaders to my spreadsheet.

I am not a professional researcher, so the going was rough. Some of the organizations donating aren't immediately recognizable as connected with the medical industry. I also tried to find all the groups tied to the pharma/biotech part of the industry and did sub-totals on these. I located 56 medical related organizations donating, with 19 of these associated with pharma or biotech. Due to not knowing all the possible organizations' names, the numbers I got will not be perfect, but they give a fair estimate of what kind of dollars are flowing into the Oregon legislature's health committees and legislative leadership.

For the big picture, I learned that, from October 2020 through mid-February of this year, the 5 members of the Senate Committee on Health Care took in \$103,400. Of this \$14,500 was from pharma/biotech groups.

The 9 member House Committee on Health took in \$206,350 in this period of which \$60,650 was from pharma.

Where the buck stops in terms of overseeing the legislative process, is with House and Senate leadership. I looked at the top 4 leaders and their medical donations. Leadership received \$181,400 from the medical organizations with \$57,500 of this coming from pharma.

All of this information, recorded on a very lengthy spreadsheet, depressed me a bit. I wondered if this potential influence by the medical industry and pharma might make our work towards universal healthcare more difficult.

Despite these fears, I trust that our legislators sincerely want to do the right things for Oregonians. I also trust that Oregon legislators will move towards reforming our current campaign finance system to assure all Oregonians, and not just special interests, are represented in our policy making process.

As a first step in this process, please pass HB 3343.

Thanks for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours Respectfully,

Lee Mercer, Silverton