

April 12, 2021

TO: Joint Committee On Ways and Means; Subcommittee On Transportation and Economic Development
FR: Charlie Fisher, State Director, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) & Stop the Debt Trap Alliance (SDTA)
RE: HB 5510

OSPIRG is a statewide, grassroots, public interest group representing thousands of Oregonians.

The Stop the Debt Trap Alliance (SDTA) is a coalition including the Center for Responsible Lending, Credit Builders Alliance, DevNW, Neighborhood Partnerships, Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives, and OSPIRG. SDTA's mission is to promote laws and business practices that equitably serve the interests of all consumers, particularly communities of color and those with the lowest incomes.

OSPIRG and SDTA support the Department of Consumer and Business Services budget for 2021-2023.

In recent years, OSPIRG has worked closely with DCBS on a wide range of consumer protection issues. Throughout our interactions with DCBS, we have consistently found the agency to be responsive, professional, and transparent.

This can be seen in action through DCBS's commitment to stakeholder engagement. The Agency regularly reaches out to the advocacy community to solicit input on emerging issues, building consensus or near-consensus support even for contentious policy proposals like the regulation of surprise out-of-network medical bills, payday lending, and more. The populations that many SDTA members serve are also often the victims of predatory lending and debt collection practices. We frequently direct these constituents to DCBS resources, which consistently help resolve issues in a consumer-friendly manner.

We also commend DCBS' uniquely transparent process for health insurance rate review. We worked closely with DCBS from 2011-2016 on the early implementation of the program and continue to engage with this process.

The agency continues to work to keep health insurance affordable and accessible in Oregon while maintaining consumer protections. For example, The DCBS administered Oregon Reinsurance program has been projected to reduce insurance premiums by 6%.

Finally, we have been impressed with DCBS' implementation of 2018's drug price transparency law. In consultation with OSPIRG, other advocates, and industry stakeholders, we found that the agency drafted regulations that both followed the intent of the law and took all viewpoints into account, including both industry and consumer concerns where appropriate. And since then, their annual drug price report has been a fantastic resource for the public and for advocates.

We strongly urge your support for DCBS' 2021-2023 budget.