

**Saturday, April 17, 2021**

**Testimony of Mike Nielsen**

**Oregon State Senate Ways and Means Roadshow**

Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward, and Rayfield, Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

Thank you for having me here to share my story today.

My name is Mike Nielsen and I'm 69 years old. My wife, Jacki, and I live in Bend, Oregon and we are proud parents to our 4 children of our own, and the 22 foster children we have helped raise. I am also a two-tour disabled Vietnam combat veteran. Like most of you, we live a life of service to our community, the state of Oregon, and our nation.

Jacki was diagnosed with hepatitis C, a virus sometimes called the "silent killer." In 2020, Jacki's condition progressed to the point that treatment was needed to save her life. She was prescribed the drug Mavyret.

A 30-day supply of this life-saving medication is priced at over \$13,000 - that comes to \$433 per pill. Even with insurance coverage, the cost of the drug was incredibly challenging for my family. Simply put, we could not afford it.

It took me a year of jumping through frustrating hoops to secure outside funding for my wife's drug. During that time she had to go without — and her body began to pay the price. Her liver began to fail and she became so fatigued she couldn't keep up with our children and grandchildren. It broke my heart watching this deterioration.

I am grateful Jacki is able to get the medication she needs to live — but she shouldn't have to depend on outside assistance when drug companies have the power to lower prices but simply choose not to. It's sad to know that even though our family has served our community and our country, the system is still letting us down in our time of need. My wife needlessly suffered simply because her drug is too expensive.

It's wrong what the drug companies are allowed to get away with by playing the system and preventing more affordable generics from coming to market. I am asking our legislators to fight for patients like us.

Thanks to bills like SB 844 and SB 763, we do not have to accept this. We cannot continue to allow Big Pharma to get away with pricing drugs out of reach for our families. It is critical that the Ways and Means committee supports this legislation and moves SB 844 and SB 763 forward. These bills would help patients access the medication they need to survive and lift the veil on closed door drug sale practices

Please help fix this broken drug pricing system Thank you for your time

