

May 13, 2021

House Committee on Health Care  
The Honorable Rachel Prusak, Chair  
State Capitol  
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Testimony in support of SB 711, submitted via OLIS

Dear Chair Prusak and members of the House Committee on Health Care,

I write in support of SB 711, an important first step in addressing disparity in certain health care costs for women compared to men.

Currently, women earn 80.5 cents for every dollar a man earns; a wage gap of 20 percent. In Oregon, forty-one percent of female-headed households with children live in poverty, and the poverty rate for single working mothers is 78 percent higher than for single working fathers.

What's more, the U.S. does not require paid maternity leave, which can have significant, even devastating consequences for families.

In addition to those serious and well-documented economic disadvantages, as consumers, women are paying more than men for common goods and services about 42% of the time. In fact, the "pink tax" has cost the average woman more than \$40,000 by the time she is 30 years old. A woman in her 60s will pay nearly \$82,000 in mark-ups and fees that men don't have to pay for similar goods and services.

So, baby steps: Senate Bill 711, of which Senator Patterson is chief sponsor, requires Oregon Health Authority to conduct a study comparing the costs of pharmaceuticals used primarily by women to the costs of pharmaceuticals used primarily by men and the factors that contribute to any differences, and report back to the legislature by mid-September 2022.

In an example included in her testimony in support of the need for SB 711, physician Karen Adams, a gynecologist at Oregon Health & Science University, indicated women with health insurance had a \$400 co-pay for a \$600/month, commonly prescribed hormone replacement drug to address menopause, while insured men paid a \$10 co-pay for a \$1200/month drug for erectile dysfunction.

In the words of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, "I ask no favor for my sex. All I ask of our brethren is that they take their feet off our necks."

As a society, we have an obligation to work continuously to make Oregon a more equitable and fair place to live and work. The women of Oregon look to our elected leaders to address such disparities. I urge passage of SB 711.

I further suggest that the Oregon Legislature form a task force with the Attorney General and consumer protection professionals at the Oregon Department of Justice and Oregon Dept. of Consumer and Business Services to look at other discriminatory practices, i.e., the “pink tax,” unfairly imposed on women.

Thank you for your willingness to shine a bright light into murky places and take action to correct discrimination on the basis of sex.

Sincerely,

Kristen Grainger  
449 Washington Street S  
Salem, OR 97302

Sources:

<https://womensfoundationoforegon.org/pdf/CountHerInreport.pdf>

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Measures/Overview/SB711>

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/money/a27409442/what-is-pink-tax/>