

Submitter: Joseph Gramer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB559

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,
I urge you to please oppose and drop SB 559.

Despite its animal friendly façade, it's a short-sighted proposal that would add financial, time, and technical burdens to veterinarians, possibly chilling their willingness to even adequately treat pain. (Unlikely? Witness what's happened with doctors treating humans for acute, chronic, even palliative and cancer-related pain since the now notorious CDC prescribing guidelines as issued in 2016.) This measure would further add to Oregon's infamous reputation as a radically anti-opioid state, an unhappy state of affairs which we in the disability community are working to change. It would almost surely lead to needless suffering and medical abandonment: this time not of people in pain through no fault of their own, but of their innocent pets and livestock.

As a basis for this proposed tweaking of the law, Secretary Fagan cites "numerous" cases of people harming their animals in order to get drugs for themselves. Where is her data? Where are her percentages? Where, in short, is the proof? Not cherry-picked or vague 'it is known' type references, but ample enough proof to warrant legislation which in turn could cause great swaths of collateral damage in Oregon. Alas, human nature is such that it's plausible that such awfulness does actually happen. But is it a large enough problem to combat with a scheme more than likely to snowball into the effective torture of countless innocent animals, as well as unjust branding and stigmatization of animal owners?

In truth, how is flagging owners of hurting animals supposed to help reduce what would more accurately be called a "heroin/illegal fentanyl epidemic?" For those paying attention, facts are superseding the old assumptions there. Patients are not addicts/abusers and our doctors are not pushers. Exceptions are vanishingly small in the real world.

Following Secretary Fagan's lead in linking legislation proposals to issues "close to our hearts," I cite our late and beloved gray tortoiseshell, Miko, a darling and comic genius among felines. Troubled in her senior years with severe arthritis, Miko nonetheless enjoyed good functionality and quality of life thanks to prescribed tramadol. She lived to 18 happy years, the last four or five of them with effective medicinal relief. Is it worth risking the effective torture of who knows how many Mikos in order to add pet owners' names to a stigmatizing drug monitoring system? (And

how fortunate that I, a human on long term opiate therapy for my own disabling pain, was not flagged as likely to filch my cat's pills!)

This is just another salvo in what has been a state-sponsored war on chronic pain patients and their compassionate medical providers in Oregon. That is, fortunately, starting to change – judging by the Senate health committee's encouraging feedback at the recent hearing on SB 607. Please keep up the good work. Crush this insidious (even if well intended) bill. Assert the humane rights of pain patients for relief, whether we have two legs or four.

P.S. – For legislation that really serves the pain-disabled community, please see Colorado's SB 23-144. Thank you.

Joseph Gramer, Salem