

Submitter: Barbara Perry
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB559

Reference proposed legislation requiring veterinarians to be a part of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

Central Coast Humane Society (Lincoln County) had a couple of board members review SB559, HB2642, the original audit report in 2018 and the follow up audit report in 2022 reference the requirement to add veterinarians to the PDMP.

We definitely support the efforts of the Oregon Health Authority to curb abuse of prescription drugs, especially as it applies to the nationwide opioid epidemic.

It is distressing to see that Oregon ranked number one last year in prescription opioid misuse (percent of population reporting.) It is just as distressing that Oregon has one of the weakest PDMP programs. We certainly do not fare well in comparison to other western states.

However, Oregon's PDMP program is improving in that several recommendations from the 2018 audit report are being or have been implemented.

There is one glaring loophole and that is Oregon does not require all prescribers and pharmacists to use the PDMP database before prescribing controlled substances (minus federal Medicaid stipulations.) Why would we think we can help curb opioid abuse if the very people prescribing 99% of the controlled substances don't have to check a database that would show abuse?

CCHS feels it would be better to first:

Close the loopholes in the current law

Concentrate on the 99% plus of those who are writing controlled substance prescriptions.

We are not suggesting that physicians and pharmacists are careless in writing or filling these prescriptions. We feel the majority are concerned, thoughtful, and do care about the issues surrounding the opioid epidemic.

As to requiring veterinarians to be included in the PDMP, we feel it is too early and much work needs to be done with the veterinarian industry to see how this will impact them.

Veterinarians are struggling to come back from the Covid shut down. But more importantly, their industry is facing massive staffing shortages that are not going to correct themselves for many years.

They already have the highest suicide rate (we saw that locally several years ago when one of our local vets committed suicide,) but staff leave due to burn out, and the veterinary medical schools cannot graduate enough DVM's to even hope to keep up. Add that to the increased requirement to certify a person to be a veterinary technician, and the problem just compounds.

Central Coast Humane Society asks for your support in putting the pause button on the requirement to add veterinarians to the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program until a more collaborative effort to fully understand the challenges, differences between human clients and animal clients and their owner(s,) is understood.

Again, we fully support the Oregon Health Authority in implementing programs to curb drug abuse in all its forms. But, adding veterinarians to the mix at this point, when their numbers are miniscule compared to the number of prescribers and pharmacists of human clients, is not the way to go until all parties understand the challenges this requirement would create.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider our position.

Central Coast Board of Directors, Barbara Perry, President