

Submitter: Daniel Hendrickson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5028

RE: Opposition to Proposed 40% Increase in Pharmacy Licensing Fees

Dear Members of the Oregon Board of Pharmacy and Distinguished Legislators, I am writing to express grave concerns regarding the Oregon Board of Pharmacy's proposal to increase pharmacy licensing fees by 40%. This proposal, being presented to the Education Subcommittee today, threatens to exacerbate an already critical crisis in Oregon's pharmacy workforce and further jeopardize patient access to essential healthcare services across our state.

The Current Crisis In Oregon's Pharmacy Landscape

Oregon is facing a pharmacy and pharmacist crisis of unprecedented proportions. Pharmacist vacancies, particularly in rural and frontier areas, have remained unfilled for months—and in some cases, years. Even urban areas are not immune to this workforce shortage. Recruitment efforts for key positions such as Directors of Pharmacy have been met with limited success, primarily due to Oregon's increasingly challenging regulatory and economic environment.

Pharmacists are choosing to practice in neighboring states like Idaho and Nevada, where broader scopes of practice, favorable regulatory climates, and more sustainable economic conditions prevail. Oregon's restrictive regulatory framework, combined with declining reimbursement rates, corporate activity taxes, and administrative burdens, has made our state an unattractive destination for pharmacy professionals.

Licensing Fee Comparison: A Flawed Benchmark

The Board's justification for the proposed fee increase relies heavily on comparisons with states like Washington and California, neglecting more relevant benchmarks such as Idaho and Nevada. For context:

Idaho: Pharmacist license renewal fee - \$120; Technician license renewal fee - \$35

Nevada: Pharmacist license renewal fee - \$180; Technician license renewal fee - \$50

Oregon's current fees already surpass those of many comparable states, and a 40% hike would place an undue financial burden on pharmacists and technicians without corresponding improvements in regulatory efficiency or support.

Impact on Patient Access and Public Health

Raising licensing fees amidst an access crisis will only worsen the situation. Recent literature ranks Oregon as the second worst state in the nation for pharmacy access. Increasing financial barriers for pharmacy professionals will discourage both current practitioners and potential recruits from choosing Oregon, directly impacting patient care, medication safety, and public health outcomes.

Higher fees will disproportionately affect:

Rural and Frontier Communities: Where pharmacy deserts are expanding, and healthcare access is already limited.

Independent Pharmacies: Struggling to survive under the weight of reduced reimbursements and increased operational costs.

New Graduates and Early-Career Pharmacists: Saddled with student debt and facing limited job prospects in high-cost regulatory environments.

Thank You,

Daniel Hendrickson Pharm.D, BCPS