

Public Comments

013 Kroger-Albertsons

This document includes written public comments related to the review of transaction 013 Kroger-Albertsons by Oregon Health Authority (OHA) under the [Health Care Market Oversight](#) program. OHA received written public comment via email to hcmo.info@oha.oregon.gov. Comments are presented below in the order received and may include typos or misspellings. Personal contact information for individuals has been removed.

OHA expresses no views on the substance of these comments, and their publication does not constitute an endorsement by OHA of the views expressed.

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Public Comments

1. Subject: Kroger-Albertsons Merger: Concern about potential impact on rural pharmacy access

Received 8/22/23

Greetings,

I'm writing to express my concern regarding the proposed merger of Kroger and Albertsons and its potential impact on the accessibility of pharmacy services in Oregon's rural communities.

In many of our state's more remote areas, grocery store pharmacies are often the only retail pharmacy option for many miles. These pharmacies serve a critical function, offering essential prescription medications, vaccinations, and health consultations to vulnerable populations.

The merger of Kroger and Albertsons could lead to the consolidation or even closure of multiple pharmacy locations, reducing the number of accessible pharmacy locations in communities where alternatives are scarce or non-existent. Such reductions in accessibility could force patients in rural Oregon to travel longer distances for their medications or forgo them altogether, creating major financial and transportation barriers and significant health risks.

While mergers can lead to operational efficiencies and cost savings for companies, it is crucial to consider the potential unintended consequences on the communities they serve, especially the most vulnerable remote communities. I urge the OHA's Health Care Market Oversight program to conduct a thorough assessment of the proposed merger's impact on rural Oregon communities and to ensure that decisions prioritize maintaining, if not enhancing, current levels of pharmacy care access.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I trust that the well-being of our state's residents will be

May 8, 2024

at the forefront of your deliberations.

Warm regards,

Nic

Nicolas Powers, MBA, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

Winding Waters Clinic

a non-profit community health center

2. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/5/2023

The merger should not be allowed. These types of mergers only benefit corporate America at the expense of pharmacists and patients. Their day 1 prerogative will be to close stores and cut wages and personnel. Which will worsen the retail pharmacy shortage statewide, predominantly affecting rural and minority communities.

3. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/11/2023

To whom it may concern;

We currently get our prescriptions from Albertsons. Kroger/Fred Meyer no longer takes Express Scripts insurance so if they merge, I'm concerned we will have to switch pharmacies again. My husband works for Intel which is who we get our insurance through. As the largest employer in Oregon, there are a lot of people that might have to change pharmacies should this happen. For this reason, I believe that the merger should be stopped or have stipulations that state that certain insurance should continue to be accepted.

Thank you.

4. Subject: Kroger merger

Received 12/14/2023

My comment is to urge the decision makers to deny this merger to prevent monopoly in the market, which hurts consumers and benefits the powerful corporation in charge of everything. I can't comment on prescription filling there, because my ohp plan goes through Kaiser, but just generally speaking monopoly of the market is bad for consumers. It creates less freedom, fewer options, and generally increased costs to consumers and increases corporate profits. :(

5. Subject: Kroger and Albertsons merger

Received 12/14/2023

I write today in opposition to the proposed Kroger and Albertsons merger.

When Bi Mart pharmacy closed in my town we were left with just 4 pharmacy's. This led to long lines and even days delays in filling prescriptions. I saw extremely distraught people hauled away by security because they did not have the right prescription transferred yet, and feared their loved one would die without it. They may have been right for all I know. The lack of notice caused this horrible back up.

Even worse, pharmacy benefit managers are negotiating such restrictive pricing, to high for profit, that more and more pharmacy's are either merging or going out of the business. The more consolidated the pharmacy drug market becomes, the easier it is to hold down competition and up the price of drugs.

Only the largest players have enough clout to limit to some degree price control by lack of competition. Please do not approve the merger, for all our sakes. Drugs are high enough already. Higher prices impact the underserved and minority populations the most, especially the uninsured.

Greg Goad

6. Subject: KROGER

Received 12/14/2023

Dear OHA

I am not liking this proposed merger. I live In Florence OR and currently there are only 2 full-service grocery stores both with pharmacies. If they merge there would be the future possibility of Safeway closing for good. Also 2 other pharmacies in town are now gone Rite Aid and Bimart Pharmacies.

Those 2 closures have already placed strains on both Employees and Public clients finding available drugs and witnessing long waiting times in lines. We have approximately 15,000 population and mostly elderly senior citizens. Therefore it doesn't sound great for us!

Thank you for listening to a Home Owner and local citizen NEEDING more services not less.

Pam Farnsworth Florence OR

7. Subject: The Safeway Kroger Merger is a bad idea

Received 12/14/2023

The Safeway/Albertsons Kroger merger is a bad idea for grocery buyers, and may be a very dangerous one for pharmacy clients.

Our three closest local stores are the above three and to close anyone of the them will result in non-competitive food prices, less inventory choice, and a bottle-neck and probable shortage and price increase of prescription drugs.

It's a bad idea that goes against the basic foundations of anti-trust law and competitive market economy.

8. Subject: Kroger-Albertsons Merger

Received 12/14/2023

Concern about potential impact on rural community's pharmacy access.

I live in St Helens, OR.

Our RiteAid Pharmacy just closed down yesterday after recently selling out to Walgreens. So that's one less pharmacy and tons of confusion for us.

Since there is a major Fred Meyer's Grocery store (now owned by Kroger) about 10 miles from here, I assume they will close down our Safeway (now owned by Albertson's) leaving us with no supermarkets and little choice in pharmacies after their takeover. I use Safeway pharmacy as it is the least expensive choice under my medical insurance plan.

Do we really need to have more of these huge corporations swallowing up our local resources? Walmart already drove out our 3 bookstores, the one excellent shoe store, a children's shop, a darling toy store, etc.

Please consider the whole picture of this merger/takeover before voting for it.

Thank you,

Sari Swick

9. Subject: Kroger Merger

Received 12/14/2023

I would like to share my concern regarding the Kroger/Albertsons potential merger.

I live at *[personal information redacted]*. I chose to use my HCV/Section 8 Voucher to live at *[personal information redacted]* apartments since it opened 4 years ago based on 3 factors.

1. Walking/Streetcar distance to the Safeway at 13th and Lovejoy for prescriptions and food.
2. Walking/Streetcar distance to medical care at Legacy Good Samaritan.
3. Affordable apartment availability and HCV/Section 8 acceptance at Maestro.

I am VERY CONCERNED that the smaller Safeway near my apartment will close and the larger Fred Meyer at 100 NW 20th Place will remain open. While it is possible to walk the extra 3ths of a mile difference between the two stores, my diminishing physical capabilities make the distance a hardship for me.

If the merger is approved without a requirement to keep the downtown Safeway at 13th and Lovejoy open, I would need to relocate perhaps out of state.

The closure of the downtown Target at SW Morrison and 10th has already decreased the number of public transit-served prescription and food locations in downtown Portland. A 2nd closure of another moderately priced prescription/grocery store location based on a merger of Kroger/Albertsons would further deteriorate life in downtown Portland.

While I understand businesses' needs to protect profits and safety from shoplifting and crime; OHA has a similar responsibility to protect the well-being of Oregon residents' access to medications, healthcare, and food.

Please consider this in your deliberations.

Joseph Reid

10. Subject: Potential Merger of Kroger and Albertson's Pharmacies -- Impact

Received 12/15/2023

Having gone through the transfer of prescriptions from McCann's Pharmacy (Tigard) to Safeway (Pacific Highway) several years ago, I speak from personal experience that this potential merger will have unfortunate consequences. While the staff at the Safeway where I fill prescriptions exhibits stellar customer service, they are already overworked and I feel management did NOT adjust to the needs of the customers to shorten wait times for pick ups through hiring more staff. I feel Safeway did NOT anticipate the flood of prescriptions that would come their way when McCann's stopped filling prescriptions. I can see that, unless the merger specifics intentionally includes a provision that more customer service staff must be hired, this merger will potentially have negative effects on the population that depends on the timely filling of prescriptions.

Thank you for letting me weigh in on this proposed merger.

Jerilyn

Jerilyn E. Felton, D. Min.

11. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/15/2023

Against the merger. Kroger stopped taking Rx coupons that helped with prescription costs. Prescription went from 0 on Medicare, to \$185. Their sales of having to buy 3 of an item to get better price is not useful or affordable for many families. Historically, They do not treat their employees well, making more corporate profits by cutting employee benefits and hours and pay. The other day I asked an employee for a price scan and they laughed. Said even if they had a scanner, it wouldn't have any batteries in it that worked.

Think they will abuse their power in a merger and not help employees or customers.

Let Trader Joe's get bigger instead. They treat their customers and employees well, and have wonderful products.

12. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/15/2023

Hello,

I am dropping a quick note in opposition of the proposed Kroger/Albertsons merger. The proposed merger exclusion of neighborhood stores such as QFC is history repeating itself, in that the non-merged stores will likely struggle and then close. While the Kroger Albertsons merger is not a true monopoly, Kroger and Albertsons stores represent a significant portion of grocery stores in most Oregon cities. By enabling this merger, there may be a brief period of competition that likely would be easily stamped out based on the simple volume that Kroger/Albertsons could achieve. As non-merged stores close, Kroger/Albertsons would become closer and closer to a monopoly in Oregon cities. From a health perspective the merger seems as though it would likely result in less access to groceries over time, most likely in areas that need access the most and/or make it more likely that stores move outside of a neighborhood radius.

As such, this merger needs to be viewed as a monopoly and vetoed.

Thanks

Chad

13. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/15/2023

Hello,

Fred Meyer, Albertsons and Safeway are all the highest priced stores for basic foodstuffs essential for all Oregonians. This merger amounts to legalized price collusion that is harmful to all who need to shop in these stores.

I say NO.

Nick De Santis

[personal information redacted]

Gaston OR

14. Subject: Kroger merger

Received 12/15/2023

Albertsons already has merged with Safeway. I think merging with another large corporation like Krogers reduces competition and choice too much.

Sharon Rodecap

15. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

Dear OHA,

From many points of view, I oppose the merger of Kroger (Fred Meyer) and Albertsons (Safeway). Where I live in rural Columbia County Oregon, there are two major players, Safeway and Fred Meyer. There is a Wal-Mart and a Walgreens in St.Helens, but the Rite-Aide is closing. Many of us do our grocery shopping where and when we pick up our prescriptions. The merger of Kroger and Albertsons would significantly decrease competition in my area for both pharmacy needs and grocery needs. They would be a conglomerate in our area like Ma Bell used to be. The merger is a bad idea.

Thank you, Ila Fetterly

16. Subject: Fred Meyer

Received 12/18/2023

In Oregon City, Safeway and Fred Meyer are the only grocery stores with a pharmacy on-site. Closing one would mean longer lines and less convenient parking. Finding an available handicap spot can be tough on some days.

Kroger no longer sends ads to homes which makes shopping more difficult. Ads make healthy meal planning and budgeting more straightforward. Prices vary between them on OTC items and groceries; healthy competition would be lost.

17. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

It is not in the public's best interest for this merger to move forward. Our family used to use the Kroger pharmacy until it became out of network with Express Scripts/Moda (One of the largest insurers in Oregon) and now we enjoy Safeway pharmacy. I'm worried a merger would leave few in-network options for our family after the nearby Walgreens closed.

18. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

In Tillamook our local independent pharmacy recently closed leaving our only options Safeway and Fred Meyer. This has already resulted in long lines and poor customer service. Our Safeway is on the list of stores that are to be sold which could potentially leave us with Fred Meyer as the only pharmacy in Tillamook county.

19. Subject: Kroger/Albertsons merger

Received 12/15/2023

We have no doubts this merger will be a complete disaster! We don't use their pharmacies as there are historically huge lines for them. We ARE grocery customers for both. Albertsons was our primary store until the disastrous 'buy-out' of a few years ago. We switched to Fred Meyer, have been happy, and now the powers-that-be are going to screw it up. Thanks!!

20. Subject: Kroger-Albertsons should not merge

Received 12/18/2023

It would devastate our community with store closings, reduce shopping options, labor firing, longer distance driving to shop, less generic brand shopping option, less pharmacy options with higher prices and less product choice, and increase in price.

Please prevent the Kroger-Albertson merger. Look at what happened in the past grocery mergers of Safeway with Albertson.

Sincerely,
Surja Tjahaja
West Linn resident

21. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

I am a 80 year old male who was recently diagnosed with COVID-19. My doctor prescribed a regimen of Paxlovid which he called in to my local pharmacy at Fred Meyer, Bend, OR. The pharmacy did not have the medication and could not say when it would be available. My doctor then contacted the pharmacy at Albertsons/Safeway in south Bend who did have the medication on hand. As you know, Paxlovid must be taken soon after a COVID diagnosis to be effective. It was important for me to have an alternate pharmacy to go to in this instance. I strongly oppose the proposed merger that would limit customers' options.

Dennis Smeage
Sunriver, Oregon

22. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

My view of the proposed Kroger-Albertsons proposed merger:

"the merger... blah blah blah... will result in lower prices for customers." That didn't happen with the Safeway-Albertsons merger, why should I believe it will happen now?

I thought potential monopolies were supposed to be avoided - merging 2 of the largest chains, at least in my area, is going to create more of a monopoly than there has ever been - where is ANY logic in this???

They will have to close a bunch of stores - like I lost the Safeway near me when Safeway and Albertsons merged, and I had to go further to a Fred Meyer because Albertsons is so ridiculously more expensive. What, do they close the store with the lower prices, forcing customers to funnel into their higher prices?

I love my local Savon pharmacy and am familiar with the people who work there - I don't want to have to go further to access a pharmacy, often one that has long waiting lines when mine doesn't.

I just absolutely do not see how this is not contributing to a monopoly - I can't believe it's even being considered, much less sounding likely. When exactly is a business considered a monopoly????! And HOW is this not creating a monopoly???

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my view.

Wendy McKee

23. Subject: Kroger Merger

Received 12/18/2023

My family is very concerned about the proposed Kroger/Albertsons merger. We live in Corvallis, where one of our pharmacies recently went out of business and others seem to be poised for closure. We have used 4 different pharmacies over the years here, and have been the most

satisfied with the customer service, roomy waiting area, prices, and client-friendly phone app at Safeway. The local Fred Meyer pharmacy has a very tiny waiting area, only one tiny room for vaccinations, and nearly always has a long line. In addition, although they try to be friendly, the staff are clearly being worked too hard. We went there for many years but have switched to the Safeway, which is closer to our home and much more pleasant.

If the merger goes through and the Safeway store closes, we do not believe the Fred Meyer pharmacy would be able to handle the larger number of clients that would result. Wait times would be even worse, the tiny waiting area would be even more overcrowded, and the single, tiny room where they do vaccinations would be even less adequate than it already is.

In addition, losing the Safeway store would take away access to grocery shopping closer to our neighborhood and cause a lot of extra traffic congestion in the Fred Meyer neighborhood, which is already congested due to poor street planning and the fact that it is down the block from Corvallis High School and on one of the main streets that is used to commute to Oregon State University. The Fred Meyer parking lot is often quite full, and at certain times of day, many students are coming in and out of the store.

It would be safer and healthier to keep both stores open for these reasons: less traffic congestion in an already congested area, fewer cars in the Fred Meyer lot would be safer for student bikers and pedestrians, and fewer people (some of whom may be sick and contagious) waiting in line together in the Fred Meyer pharmacy. It would be, in our opinion, better for consumers to not allow the merger and to keep both stores open, allowing a wider choice of brands, a better shopping experience, and convenient store locations, as well as healthy competition that keeps prices down and gives companies an incentive to offer good sale prices and rewards programs.

Thank you for considering our needs in this decision-making process. Please, for the many reasons stated above, oppose this unhealthy and unethical merger!

Anne and Family
Corvallis, Oregon

24. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

I am against the merger. The two companies dominate my communities grocery & pharmacy options, but they do compete with one another, if they merge into one huge company there will be no competition at all in my community.

Respectfully submitted
Laurie Bennett

25. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

“He who controls the food, controls the population.”

To intentionally create a food monopoly is very dangerous. Their legal budget will far outweigh any regulation agencies budget. They will do as they please and you will be helpless.

I worked in the grocery industry in management for 30 years. Where chains have deep political ties they cheat without fear.

Let Safeway fail, the holding company that owns them will not fail. Let smaller companies take their business, who have a vested interest in their neighbors. Do not subsidize gigantic corporations.

Thank You

26. Subject: Kroger Albertsons merger

Received 12/18/2023

I am currently a cashier at Safeway in Lacey Washington. I am from Oregon and my children still reside there, meaning what happens in Oregon matters very much to me. When I moved to Washington in 2016, I became a cashier at Fred Meyer. I worked there over 6 years and worked there throughout the pandemic. I was very involved with the safety committee and the promises team (employee uplift and community outreach program). I know you are looking at how the pharmacy changes would affect the community, and my experience to speak of is mainly as an employee of the purchasing company. From my experience in the six plus years of working with Kroger, they are completely untrustworthy!! They have very little respect for their employees! During the Pandemic, the company was the last in all of Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater to start allowing us protection and then putting up barriers for us-a month after all competitors!! Last fall into New Years, the company had "glitch" in the new payroll program they installed and thousands of employees were not getting paid, or paid accurately! That's a huge deal for an employee who is living paycheck to paycheck! Kroger corporate wasn't facing homelessness, nor were they fixing the problem with any urgency!! They had to be sued by our union before they put much energy into getting the issue resolved.

Not only do I have concerns about the company's treatment of their employees, but I am very concerned about the monopoly that they are working towards!! I have experienced Kroger corporate lie to me for most of the time I worked with them and I am afraid of the country believing the "promises" the company is making now in order to get the merger. I know this communication is little about the health concerns on the community, or the pharmacy; I truly believe that the merger is unhealthy for the community on SO many levels and am compelled by my convictions to share my experience and feelings about the merger to all who may want to know. Thank you for reading this.

27. Subject: Kroger Albertsons merger

Received 12/18/2023

Thank you for soliciting feedback on the potential merger of Kroger and Albertson's - Safeway.

One area of pharmacy to investigate is the lack of staffing Kroger could potentially do in Oregon. As you may know, pharmacies have tiers (in the eyes of employees). Costco pays and staffs very well, thus reducing workload on their staff pharmacists. Walgreens and Rite-Aid do not, seen in the recent walkouts in the Midwest and east coast stores.

Fred Meyer (Kroger in Oregon) has definitely slid towards the "Rite-Aid" side of staffing. This leads to stressed pharmacists who will make more mistakes and potentially hurt customers. Safeway and Albertsons are...better. Not great, but better.

In our county of ~25,000 (Union) people there are 3 pharmacies (Wal-Mart, Safeway, and an independent). I believe we would be negatively served by a merger. One outcome could be mandating a baseline of staffing hours in stores of certain script volumes.

Oh, please look at Baker County. They may lose a pharmacy with the merger, either Albertsons or Safeway store closing.

28. Subject: Kroger Albertsons merger

Received 12/18/2023

Hello, I understand you're soliciting feedback on the proposed merger between Kroger and Albertsons, specifically for pharmacy operations.

I'm strongly opposed to the merger.

I used to be a customer of the Fred Meyer pharmacy a few miles from home. Service was poor. It would take days for new prescriptions to be ready, and oftentimes it would take half an hour after I asked for it to be actually ready.

My insurance plan's pharmacy group stopped dealing with Kroger. I found out when I had to pay out of pocket for a medication and the pharmacist couldn't tell me why. A month later I received a mail from my insurance saying that their agreement would run out at the end of the year. Even though they thought it should work for another month or two, it had already failed me. I was upset.

But, the benefit is I moved to the local Albertsons pharmacy. They have significantly better customer service, far lower latency in getting new prescriptions ready, nearly no waiting time when picking up prescriptions, and much better communication at both the infrastructure and personal levels.

I like the Albertsons pharmacy I use now.

I don't know what the pharmacist staff actually want. But I would hate to see them taken over by Kroger. Albertsons provides much better service and they talk with my insurance. If the merger goes through, I will probably have to find yet another new pharmacy and I'll have to go to one that's ten times further away and not in a grocery store that I use every week anyway.

(Perhaps it's not relevant to your needs, but the Albertsons produce quality seems much higher today than several years ago. The staff are friendlier. Now, I prefer shopping at Albertsons. When they both offer what I need to buy, I will choose Albertsons over Fred Meyer every time.)

Thanks

29. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

I am pleased to read that you are seeking input on how the Kroger/Albertsons merger will affect pharmacy. This is a very wise question to get answers to.

I became a Certified Pharmacy Technician in 2007 after graduating from the LBCC course and becoming Nationally Certified. I worked for Albertsons from 1/2008-7/2013 in Albany Oregon. From the beginning of my employment I found that the grocery business was no place for a Medical Office of pharmacy.

They blurred the legality lines of receiving some deliveries designated for pharmacy through their back receiving doors. The boxes of medication would be opened and eventually make its way up to my department.”

The management of the store considered pharmacy to be just another department that effected their bottom line. It was compared to profits of the bakery, deli, and front end. The manager would come into the pharmacy with his tally sheets and apply pressure to increase script count. He would inform us that pharmacy profits carried the front-end grocery overhead and at times the front end carried pharmacy overhead. They saw their bonuses linked to our medical facility.

I do not support grocery stores running pharmacy business, they do not revere it as a health care facility. More stringent care must be implemented by the Oregon Health Authority to ensure the safety of the lives of the people of Oregon. Sanitary conditions are overlooked as nobody’s job.

Proper decision making on each prescription is pushed to its limits when pharmacists have to do counseling, immunization, ordering, profit management, scheduling of staff, board requirements, along with monitoring 5 or more clerks and technicians. The list goes on with the demands to increase profits. It has become an unsafe environment for the care and wellbeing of human beings’ medical health.

The profit driving greed of the grocery stores push pharmacies to purchase the cheapest generics that have too great a variance to its brand counterpart along with many binder and fillers that cause ILL side effects. The pharmacies won’t purchase more effective generics because of this greed. I’ve had pharmacies tell me their McKesson distributor only has these inferior generics which I feel is highly unlikely. They have turned away Dr Orders of brand medication and blocked me from receiving proper treatment for my healthcare.

The Oregon Health Authority needs to look into the pharmacy “pick ups” that have become prevalent at every pharmacy in this community.

Discussion with the Dr’s in Mental Health running the marriage to the Community and Family Heritage Line, has evidence of a total breakdown of this industry.

I could give more detail of what I have experienced, receiving counterfeit medications and pressured to obtain my personal medication, prescribed by my Dr through some “pick up” third party. This is totally absurd and something I would never do. So I have gone without my medication for years which prevented me from continuing in my profession. I have tried to bring this to the attention of my Dr’s, police department and the pharmacy managers and customer service of their corporate divisions along with manufacturers.

I will make myself available to discuss these matters and bring evidence if need be.

Thank you for looking closer at pharmacy in grocery stores and how this merger will affect the health and safety of Oregonians.

Sincerely,
Eileen L Krug

30. Subject: KROGER

Received 12/18/2023

Please take all action to stop the Kroger/Albertson's merger.

1. Sole competition. Albertson's is the only true competition to Kroger in Oregon. Trader Joes, Grocery Outlet, Market of Choice the small grocers, and the natural food stores are not in the same league and don't provide any real price competition.
2. The divested stores fail. When Safeway and Albertson's merged, the managing judge shortsightedly required a divestiture of stores. Those stores were cherry picked as the worst performers and, to no one's surprise, they failed, leaving the communities which they had previously served without pharmacy or grocery services. This only improved profits for Safeway/Albertsons and hurt the consumers.
3. History of Safeway monopolistic success. Safeway illegally funded a price war which resulted in the closure of the 3 Pigs (3 Boys) store in Seaside. While the 3 Pigs finally won their lawsuit, the store was closed permanently by then. So Safeway won, because they were the only show in town and could charge whatever they wanted, which they did. Now, only Fred Meyer remains as competition on the Oregon coast.
4. History of Kroger's failure to keep promises. When the West Hollywood Fred Meyer was proposed, the community complained that the Hollywood Fred Meyer would be redundant and closed. Fred Meyer promised that it would not close the store. It was gone in two years and nobody could do anything about it.
5. History of Kroger's failure to serve community. Fred Meyer closed the Martin Luther King store, creating a food desert in the black community. It got away with it by giving the property to a local non-profit and leasing it back. But it didn't renew the lease and there was nothing anyone could do about it. People can't walk to the store anymore.

The merger will hurt the community. It will reduce the availability of pharmacy services and groceries. This only serves the profit motive of the stockholders without concern for the consumers. The paltry excuse of reduced pharmaceutical prices is meaningless if there is no price competition and there is no store to serve the consumer.

Please do what you can to stop this harmful merger.

Keith R Raines

31. Subject: Kroger Safeway/Albertson's merger – pharmacies – 1/17/2024

Received 12/18/2023

413 + 237 stores = 650 stores potentially affected. I wonder how far apart must the stores be from each other in order for them to still be owned by Kroger or owned by C & S Wholesale Grocers. It's hard to know for sure what will happen until those store locations are publicized.

Kroger's merger with Safeway/Albertson will certainly affect anyone who has specific pharmacies within their prescription drug network according to their individual health insurance plans.

One of the issues which occurred during COVID-19 pandemic is where to obtain the COVID-19 vaccines as they became available. I ended up going to 3 different pharmacies to get my Moderna COVID vaccines & none of them where I would usually get a prescription filled. One of them closed this year (Rite Aid). That by itself caused people to obtain vaccines in multiple places which weren't their original pharmacy. That process just spread out a person's medical history in multiple places.

Secondly, I would be concerned about traveling to a pharmacy that wasn't in Portland, Multnomah County, within a 5 mile radius from my Drs. office, urgent care clinic, or home. Travel time on public transit is an issue of convenience. I'm most concerned with Fred Meyer grocery stores & pharmacies. (Fred Meyer tends to have the cheapest grocery prices than Safeway (No. 2) or Albertson's (No.3)). It is very convenient to have prescriptions filled at the same grocery store where one shops.

This also comes at a time when virtually everyone who has an employer paid health insurance plan or has a Medicare health insurance plan has to enroll in their current health insurance plan or change their health insurance plan. It will disrupt the open enrollment process for health insurance plans that just ended Dec. 7, 2023. No matter what happens, it will be disruptive to all, including the health insurance companies who create provider networks. They will need to revise their pharmacy networks & directories.

I'm not able to volunteer for your committee, but I'm sending you my comments to think about as you analyze the Kroger merger with Safeway/Albertsons.

32. Subject: Regarding mergers that will influence pharmacies and also basic everyday groceries

Received 12/18/2023

As a senior, I have seen lines for many people who waiting in line to purchase their medication. Where I live in NE Portland, at the original Fred Meyer, on a Saturday the lines are huge. I had to go to 3 different pharmacies. when I was informed a prescription I have taken for several years, was not refilling it. At that time it took me 3 attempts to refill it. I doubt I would be here today, if I had not persevered. (Incidentally this pharmacy that discontinued my refill is closed.) Those who live in areas that are less populated, will suffer the most, as they will not have the options I had. If we as a community do not work together, we will fall. Those who are not being cared about (rural areas) will be in very difficult situations. I also see no benefits with these chains merging. When Albertsons and Safeway merged, Albertson prices went up very noticeably. I anticipate this will

happen again, that prices will go up with this merger for basic groceries. We have enough people in our communities and across our nation who have to rely on government assistance or food banks. No one in America should starve or not have shelter (a roof over their head).

33. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

I live in Roseburg Oregon and I am against the merger of Kroger and Albertsons/Safeway.

We have one of each: Fred Meyers, Albertsons and Safeway. The selection at all those stores will all be the same. The decrease in competition will raise prices for customers that have already been hit by inflation. We already have less pharmacy services due to the closer of Bi-Mart pharmacies. It was bad enough that Albertsons bought Safeway. Now Kroger wants to buy Albertsons and Safeway. Supposedly 69 stores will be bought by a third party but historically those stores have eventually closed because they could not compete with the mega-conglomerate. This will not help the consumer but only Kroger.

Tim Land

34. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

Regarding a possible merger between Kroger and Safeway/Albertsons :

I have been hearing very little more than occasional rumors.

I live on the coast and am concerned over the possibility that this might happen. When Bi-Mart closed their pharmacy in Lincoln City several years ago it appears to have overloaded the Safeway pharmacy; not sure what effect it had on Walgreens, as I do not shop there.

It is not uncommon to see 10-15 people standing in line at the Safeway pharmacy, yet they do not seem to be able to increase their staffing and/or service area in order to speed up the process.

I have used Fred Meyer as my pharmacy for 15+ years. They are conveniently located near the store entrance and have an efficient system to handle the flow of customers. I would be disappointed if they were to shift customers from one store to another in order cut costs to increase shareholder profits, which seems to be the common driving force for large corporations.

That Safeway and Albertsons have merged has already reduced competition, and I believe that competition is one of the only reason for the stores to focus on service to their customers over simply shareholder profits.

For that reason, I oppose the merging of Kroger and Albertsons.

SLS

35. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

I oppose the merger of so many major entities. Competition keeps prices down and quality and choices up. I invite OHA's attention to a recent Oregonian ad by Winco, comparing prices for identical carts of Groceries:

Winco--\$98, Walmart--\$123. Fred Meyer (Kroger)--\$148. In Gresham, a Safeway closed near an Albertson's, whose prices are substantially higher than Winco. After a bout with Grave's Disease, I had a prescription with Safeway, \$16 for a 90-day supply of levothyroxin that regularly increased. I shifted to Walmart for \$10, who was even cheaper than Kaiser. I continue to be surprised that shoppers pay so little attention to prices, shopping at really expensive places. Drugs are a commodity just like groceries. When prices are determined by status, like Whole Foods, we all suffer.

I'm also a climate activist, and close-to-home access to all products are beneficial to consumers and the planet. When a merger includes major suppliers, like the pending merger, it's just a scheme to increase income to those who already have too much. Please oppose the merger. Combining drugs with groceries also tends to raise prices, for people who choose 1-stop shopping. "Small is Beautiful."

John Weigant

36. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

Our family doesn't think this is a good idea for this merger to go through. Kroger is already a huge monopoly and by adding Albertsons and Safeway stores and then forcing many to close or be sold off reduces competition to help keep a balance in the marketplace and also keep stores from closing in smaller locations with already long travel distances.

The fact that all these pharmacies are closing already, this doesn't bode well for any community, large or small.

Mickey Lee

Portland OR

37. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/18/2023

first of all the idea they will try to find savings for customers they should start now I could take you on a tour of the Fred Meyer I go to and they are not competitive on hundreds of items no one says they have to compete and so when they say lower prices would be coming !!!

I can only laugh!!!! as customers we know better?

38. Subject: Former Kroger fred meyer employee stop the merger

Received 12/19/2023

My name is Matthew Knoll. I was a produce manager at the Sandy Oregon store 663 fred meyer.

As is Fred Meyer is struggling to keep their pharmacy open period. Staffing issues has the pharmacy cutting hours and now unlike any other department in the chain they close the pharmacy completely mid day for lunch breaks. This greatly hinders customers ability to get there prescriptions In a timely matter. It prevents Dr's from communicating with the pharmacy in what should be an hour of business.

The convenience of working in the store still never got me to switch to the pharmacy due to long long wait times and the lunch time closure. I drove to Safeway on my lunch breaks from the fred meyer I worked at to recieve my daughter's medications because Safeway pharmacy was staffed and open the whole day and the wait times for pharmaceuticals was tremendously lower.

Staff at the Fred Meyer pharmacy also don't have general knowledge of how insurance works and the one time I tried to get a prescription there as an employee I had to pay full price for the medications because they didn't know how to process insurance right. Unlike at the Safeway pharmacy where they work with you to figure out your insurance needs, and offer you an uninsured insurance option.

Furthermore Fred meyer worked to get the fuel laws passed. Saying they wouldn't cut employees from the fuel department. This is not true and unions are now trying to change the fuel pumping laws once again. Kroger has a cut hours and prophet philosophy where they try to cut hours and make sure they make the most money bottom line. They do not offer employees full time work so they themselves do not have to pay Healthcare.

This merger is bad news, for our food, our pharmacies, and our communities.

Please stop this merger. I will gladly give my anecdotal in person in Salem over the phone, please stop this merger, it will destroy my community.

Thanks for your time,

Matthew Knoll

39. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/19/2023

Don't let Kroger take over Albertsons!

40. Subject: Kroger Albertson Merger – Pharmacy Concern

Received 12/19/2023

Hello –

As a technologist and an employee at the Office of Information Services within OHA, I did a little digging into the two separate and distinct pharmacy technologies that both Kroger and Albertson use. Here is what I found.

Kroger uses an app that can be downloaded from the Apple or Android stores that manages their pharmacy engagements from their customer base. See the pic below.

Kroger

The Kroger Co.

4.5★
288K reviews

10M+
Downloads

Everyone

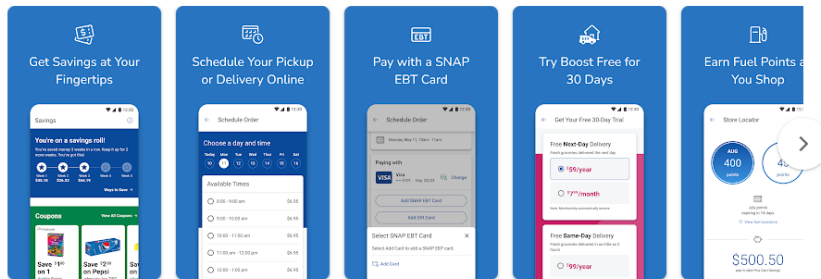
Install



Share



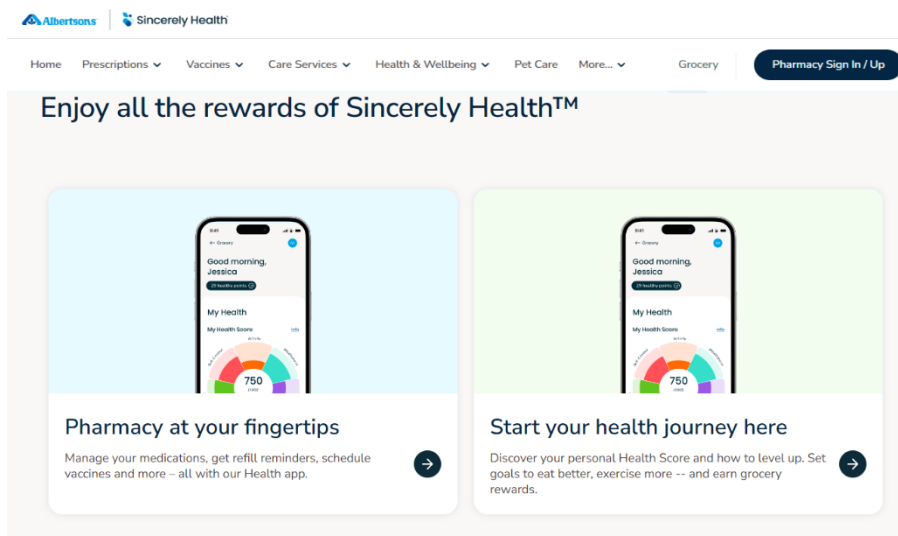
Add to wishlist



About this app →

Looking for a faster, easier, more rewarding shopping experience? Save time and money with the Kroger app! It puts convenience, savings and rewards at your fingertips. Simply download the app, create an account and register your Kroger Shopper's Card to access all these great benefits:

Albertson on the other hand uses a different app known as “Sincerely Health”. See the pic below.



The concern I have from a technology perspective is generally speaking when organizations merge, they also tend to merge or sunset their technology solutions. Either way this may be worth looking into a little bit deeper to ensure that as part of their merger they have a well thought out plan on how both customer bases will be able to share data across the two separate platforms, and if one of the platforms is going to be retired, what is their plan to migrate that customer base to the new platform, ensuring they do not interrupt much needed prescriptions by their users.

Something to consider in our evaluation of the merger.

Thanks,

Sean Nickerson

41. Subject: Merger w/pharmacy repercussions in Coos Bay, Oregon

Received 12/19/2023

Currently in Coos Bay there are two pharmacies to serve the population of approximately 15,900. With the closing of the BI-Mart pharmacies an enormous strain was imposed on these two remaining pharmacies resulting in extremely long lines of customers as well as harried pharmacists and pharmacy assistants. People waited unhappily for prescriptions and pharmacies struggled to keep up with demands. To this day, it is not uncommon to find long lines of people waiting to pick up medicine.

If Albertson and Kroeger merge, Coos Bay will be left with one pharmacy to serve the local population. This will result in even longer wait times for patrons and an increase in the workload for the remaining pharmacy. This could have disastrous results for people and employees as well.

Currently the two pharmacies are extremely busy. One pharmacy for an entire town would be totally inadequate and unacceptable.

I sincerely hope the total impact of this merger and pharmacy closure will be carefully considered and the correct decision to prevent this merger will be made.

May 8, 2024

42. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/19/2023

The proposed merger between Albertsons and Kroger would create such a hardship for communities like Coos Bay. We've already lost the BiMart and Rite Aid pharmacies, which has resulted in long, long lines at Fred Meyer and Safeway. Walgreens likely will leave next. Communities like Coos Bay, with high rates of senior citizens need more pharmacies, not fewer.

Kathy Erickson

43. Subject: Kroger merger

Received 12/19/2023

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed merger of Kroger (\$KR) and Albertson's/Safeway.

I have recent experience with both companies' pharmacies and strongly believe that a merger would not be beneficial for any of the current or future customers of either entity.

In fact, I have recently moved several of my prescriptions from Kroger/Fred Meyer to other pharmacies due to price and problems refilling standing Rx orders. In contrast, I have used Albertson's/Safeway since the Covid epidemic to obtain immunizations and routine shots and have found their customer service, scheduling flexibility and price (when there was out of pocket expense) to be vastly superior to Kroger/Fred Meyer's.

44. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/19/2023

I live in Newberg Oregon. If Kroger and Albertson/Safeway are all one company there will be no competition for pharmacy or grocery stores.

There used to be 4-5 independent pharmacies in our town, now there are NONE!

There's Nap's Thriftway, Safeway and Fred Meyer for grocery stores in town. If Safeway and Fred Meyer are the same thing then all that's left to compete is Thriftway and the conglomerate of Safeway & Fred Meyers.

How long will Thriftway be able to hold out?

It's a bad idea.

Sharon Koozer
Newberg, OR

45. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/20/2023

I fully support the Kroger/Albertsons merger.

The merger will allow greater economies of scale and the ability of the larger Kroger company to more effectively compete against huge competitors such as Walmart.

The pharmacy industry is in turmoil with large chains such as CVS and Walgreens closing stores. Albertsons is not selling to Kroger because they are a strong company. Rather, they are owned by a venture capital fund with limited experience running a complicated grocery organization that has not performed well. It's highly likely that, should the merger fail, the future will include fewer Albertsons/Safeway stores due to their own mismanagement.

Further Kroger has pledged \$1B to modernize stores and extend union contracts to Albertsons employees.

Sincerely,

Scott Osburne
Portland, OR

46. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/20/2023

Hello,

I am concerned about the Kroger/Albertsons/Safeway merger specifically because of Medicare prescription c-coverage.

My mother had to stop using her nearby Fred Meyer/Kroger pharmacy when they stopped accepting her Cigna Medicare prescription coverage in 2023, and switched to a much further away Safeway pharmacy. Dropping my mother's prescription coverage did not lower her prescription prices (as Kroger claims its goal), it would have significantly increased them had we stayed with Fred Meyer/Kroger.

Our area of north Clackamas County has few pharmacy options. If her Safeway pharmacy stops accepting her prescription coverage due to the Kroger merger, I don't know where we could go and I don't want her to have to switch Medicare plans mid-year.

If this merger is approved, I request a stipulation that the pharmacies be allowed to continue to negotiate their accepted insurance plans independent of Kroger corporate interests and influence.

Thank you,

Sarah House

47. Subject: (no subject)

Received 12/20/2023

My family gets prescriptions with Fred Meyer. I don't want Albertsons to buy out Fred Meyer. Their prices are lower than Albertsons and people that need to go to Fred Meyer wouldn't be able to afford food. Some live nearby and have to walk to Fred Meyer for prescriptions vaccines and groceries. Albertsons would not be affordable.

I thought I saw on the news that Oregon legislature passed a bill so Fred Meyer won't be bought out. I love Fred Meyer and don't want it to change. I need to use coupons there that help as well.

48. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/21/2023

To Oregon Health Authority,

I retired early from what was a satisfying pharmacist career. The decrease in number of pharmacies has placed an unbearable burden on pharmacy. In the town where I practiced the closure particularly of Bi-Mart pharmacies caused a huge gap in patient care and access to medication. Many times people were unable to get needed medications in a timely fashion due to pharmacy closures or heavy workload which prevented prescription completion. In the town where I live there used to be 5 pharmacies now there are 3. Unfortunately there is a Fred Meyer directly across the road from a Safeway. The Fred Meyer store is very busy with lines of people most times. If Kroger sells off the Safeway store and closes that pharmacy it will be a huge burden on patients and their care. If they sell to someone who tries to keep the pharmacy open I truly believe it won't be open for long. Pharmacy is a losing business model with the current system of reimbursement. The merger of Kroger and Safeway/Albertsons is not good for grocery or pharmacy customers. It seems to me this is the very example of antitrust activity that is supposed to be prevented. All pharmacy patients will be adversely affected if this merger is allowed to go through.

Sincerely,

Brenda L Johnson Rph

49. Subject: Kroger – Albertson's Merger

Received 12/21/2023

To whom it may concern:

If this merger is allowed, we will have food deserts with no competition. As it stands now, under Kroger, the offerings at Fred Meyer have been reduced significantly. I can no longer find many of the brands I know and love because they have been replaced by Kroger brands.

The can do attitude that you will find in both Safeway and Albertsons will no longer exist because we have found that the Kroger workers are not empowered to help customers.

In many smaller communities, Safeway or Albertsons are the only viable grocery options available. So we would end up with food deserts where no one had a variety of food available and once Kroger has the monopoly, prices will go up. The Kroger stores are run by a total profit at all costs motive so while we used to shop at Fred Meyer almost exclusively, we now only shop there for items that cannot be found elsewhere.

I urge the OHA to oppose this merger with all the resources that you have available to you.

:)Blaine Ackley
Hillsboro, Oregon

50. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/21/2023

Hello,

I strongly oppose the merger, not just because it's likely to decrease the number of pharmacies & mean far less competition among pharmacies with a corresponding decrease in service, hours, & increase in prices. While Kroger claims it will sell to other chains or independents, I doubt if there's any penalty if Kroger fails to do so, and I strongly doubt if whoever, if any other supermarket chain purchases any of the stores Kroger claims it will sell, that along if the sale contract will include an agreement (w/a stiff financial penalty for failure to comply--enforceable by the towns/cities where the store is located w/attorney fees awarded to the city/town if successful) that the purchaser continue to keep the store pharmacy open for say, at least 5 years. Rite-Aid also has a pharmacy, but given its bankruptcy filing, it'd debatable how much longer it will be open, it's often close to empty when I go there and Newport stores, like other parts of the US/Oregon, have difficulty staffing their pharmacies anyway.

I also oppose the merger because Kroger has already made sure that there is less and less competition, at least in Oregon. In my town, there are 4 supermarkets, Safeway (which Kroger plans to take over), Walmart, Fred Meyer, and the former JC Market (no pharmacy). There's also a Grocery Outlet, which has no pharmacy isn't a true supermarket, and Oceana, a natural foods co-operative (which also has no pharmacy). If Kroger owns Safeway, how much competition is there in Newport? Less, considerably less. Kroger may also decide to close the Safeway (or the Fred Meyer), why not, since they're both owned by Kroger, why have one Kroger entity competing w/another? Why not just keep the more profitable one? In other towns, there may only be an Albertson's and a Fred Meyer, or that's all there is in one part of the town.

Oregon should have an interest in making it easy for people to do their food shopping without having to drive or drive 10+ miles. The Kroger takeovers will ensure that is true for more & more towns in Oregon. Or people will left with 2 choices, if that, Walmart or a Kroger store. That's not true competition and makes it more likely that people will have to travel further to get to buy food or pick up medication from a pharmacy. I am tired of corporations and their profits being more important then the people they're supposedly serving.

Susan Hogg
Newport, OR

51. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/21/2023

We both feel strongly that the merger of Kroger and Albertson's will have a net negative effect on Oregon, both fiscally, as well as availability of services. This would cause the closure of multiple area stores and pharmacies negatively impacting the most vulnerable members of our communities, who do not have easy access to transportation to get to the next nearest pharmacy for their medication needs, not to mention groceries, and other commodities. In our relatively small town we have both a Fred Meyers (Kroger) and a Safeway at opposite ends of the town. This is handy for those with transportation issues as they do not need to go clear across town to get what they need. Without a doubt one of those would close under this merger (probably the Safeway, since the Fred Meyers offers more services, but that is not guaranteed), causing people to have to seek care/help with their needs elsewhere. Both stores appear to be doing well, since they are fairly easy access for people to the north end or south end of town, from the mid point outwards. The other consideration here, is that no matter what promises are made by these large corporations, with less competition, prices always rise. This has been demonstrated time and time again across the country, and always has a negative financial as well as available services impact on the members of the community.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. No need to respond.

Sincerely yours,

Dave and Sandi Reynolds

52. Subject: Kroger merger

Received 12/21/2023

Hello,

Beats me why OHA is involved in this but what the heck. As a consumer, I think the merger of Kroger and Albertson's will be a nightmare for consumers.

It will create a "near" monopoly for buying groceries. I am lucky and can get a ride to go shop at winco or trader joe's but what about others who can't get a ride? They will be stuck shopping at these stores and you can bet everything done will be in their interests and not the consumers.

I am guessing that maybe OHA is involved due to prescriptions being transacted at these places? if so, again the monopoly thing!!

If I was in charge I would give a big "NO" to this merger. It only benefits them, not us.

Denise Roberts
NE PDX

53. Subject: Kroger, SAVOn drug stores are very important!

Received 12/22/2023

If Kroger is planning on selling 49 stores in Oregon. IT will affect Senior able to get to rx/pharmacy. That will close pharmacy, Eugene in the last few years already have lost to many pharmacy. If you're a healthy eater good luck at Fred Myers.

Compare to Albertsons & Safeway which has lots of organic produce. Fred Meyer Does not have a lot of selection of fresh fruit. At least the one on West 11 & the one on river road.

The Safeway store on 18th in Eugene Oregon has the best organic produce selection. My husband has Parkinson, the organic food is important. The store on West 11th organic produce very low quality, no selection, and so much higher. Can not find fresh fruit a lot! I have health issues myself, I purchase a lot of fresh fruit at Albertson on Royal/Barger in Eugene all year around. Which you cannot get at the Fred Myers stores. The best organic produce is Safeway on 18th. If I am in down or close by I make a special trip there just for organic produce, then I will purchase other food items.

A little about myself 64 yr old in Live in Elmira, Oregon. My husband has Parkinson's he takes a lot of rx.

We do not feel safe going to pharmacy on west 11th. In the last year a lot of pharmacy have closed even the Bi-mart in veneta, Oregon, and a lot in small downs in the area. Albertsons on Royal/Barger. Is so busy they do not answer phone there swap. People drive all over the place from small towns to get there.

If you have surgery, or seen at Riverbed Hsp. The Dr. or surgeon want you on a certain RX asap. You may have to wait weeks, at Fred Myers.

The Albertson on 18th you can get a Rx on way home from Hsp.

Fred Myers will not do this. My best friend call in a rx which she already takes. They say one date on the phone, but you have to wait a week or more. Not want they say over the phone, She is 67 years of age had as told me the Fred Myers on River Road pharmacy sucks. I have tried to pick up RX for other people there, when sick or recover from an injury. Fred Myers on River Road, or west 11th no luck.

But the Pharmacy at Albertson on 18th and chambers you can talk to a human and they will do their best to get you medicine important one within 24 hrs.

If you want to get Covid shots, RSV, flu etc. The Safeway on 18th has a separate waiting room, with chairs. All the Parkinson's people I now go there for shots.

At Fred Myers it standing and waiting, if there are a few chairs, your right in the way of other people.

The Fred Myer store on West 11th Is not save for elderly people. The homeless the drug problems. I have people knocking on my window begging for money, or yelling at you why they are on some high. I have watch families give candy, snack to their kids inside the store, telling them to eat this fast. Before an employee comes, while I am comparing prices in the same aisle. [is mostly why I do not shop at Fred Myers)

I or family have never worked at supermarket store.

We cannot afford to lose more pharmacy in the Eugene Area.

The remove of Albertson and Safeway will reduce the competition greatly.

Any so many ways I shop the Albertson, and Safeway store in Eugene.

I repeat the West 11th store for senior is not save, or it makes shopping a lot more stressful. The aisle in Fred Myers are very narrow, not the same food.

The experience at Albertsons and Safeway's is nice.

Please do not make it harder for seniors to do their grocery shopping, by removing the Albertson on Royal/Barger and the Safeway on 18th.

The merger is not a good for Seniors residents of the Eugene Area.

Thank you

Christina

54. Subject: Kroger vs. Albertson's

Received 12/23/2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I will not walk into a Fred Meyer/Kroger store. Their prices are almost twice as high as Winco and Walmart Neighborhood Markets. This means that if they merge, I will not be walking into an Albertson's/Safeway, either. Fred Meyer/Kroger practices EXTREME DISCRIMINATION, both age discrimination and discrimination against single people.

Many older people, like myself, are not particularly savvy with technology and last year when I was in a nearby Kroger -- for the LAST TIME -- I was told that I would not get the "best price" due to the fact that I didn't have their "APP" on my phone!!! The manager was called over, gave me the best price but told me I had to have the app on my phone. When pigs fly!

As for discrimination against single people, "buy three prepared salads to get the 'best price'." I'm 85 years old, live alone and eat small portions and just ONE of these salads will provide me with three meals. Why should I be forced to buy three or four prepared salads, or anything else, to "get the best price" when they will go bad before I can consume them? What a scam. This is discrimination, pure and simple.

So go ahead and merge, you scamming, discriminating giants, because you'll lose a LOT of customers!

Irene Reid

55. Subject: Kroger – Albertsons merger

Received 12/24/23

I am opposed to this merger! Our small, rural, coastal community has already suffered with closing of Pharmacies, and we now have only Fred Meyer (Kroger) and Safeway. With this merger there is a strong possibility of Safeway eventually closing. Our community is already suffering with

needing prescribed meds with long lines at both pharmacies and sometimes waits of several days to receive our prescribed needed meds d/t the pharmacies having delays receiving/obtaining these meds. This merger would only benefit "Monopoly Corporate" and (AGAIN) greatly affect the already strain on pharmacist shortage, pharmacy employees, but ultimately the "patient" population!

Linda Beyer
Tillamook, Oregon

56. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/24/23

We are new residents of Nehalem and watched with interest last summer as the local Tillamook Pharmacy closed and the remaining pharmacies in Safeway and Fred Meyer's became swamped and overwhelmed with business. Wait times were greatly increased and this is a concern when you have people with infections and in pain waiting far longer than is healthy in grocery stores rather than at home recovering.

Now, Kroger is proposing a merger that might again result in closing one of the 2 remaining pharmacies in Tillamook, or at least greatly increase wait times and reduce services, not to mention the overall impact of a lack of competition among grocery chains.

We've seen this story before when Walgreens merged with Rite-Aid and the resulting closure and the loss of necessary pharmacies when they shut down most of the Rite-Aid stores near us in Southern California. The empty stores are still a blight on the community and the shopping centers where they were located are still feeling the lack of foot traffic.

For these reasons, we oppose the proposed Kroger - Albertson's merger.

The Murphys
Nehalem, OR

57. Subject: Kroger-Safeway Merger

Received 12/26/23

I am very concerned about the Kroger-Albertson's merger especially with regard to their pharmacy services, but also some of their grocery items.

I have Celiac Disease and in order to ensure my medications are gluten free, I sometimes have to have a particular brand. Safeway Pharmacy does special order my medications if necessary in order to accommodate this medical necessity. Last time I talked to Fred Meyer (Kroger) Pharmacy, they advised me they did not special order medications so could not accommodate this medical necessity.

I have not been able to get other pharmacies in the area to special order the required brands, and have had bad luck using mail order pharmacies. If Safeway is no longer able to order these meds, I will have nowhere to get my medications.

I am worried that if Kroger buys Safeway-Albertsons, I will not be able to get the medications that I need because Kroger will not special order particular medication brands in order to accommodate my medical needs.

I am also concerned there will not be the variety of products/groceries, both gluten free and otherwise that are available now since there will no longer be any product and price competition or variation between the two companies, which will limit available choices and affect prices.

Vickie Bransky
Bend, OR

58. Subject: Proposed Merger

Received 12/26/23

Thank you for asking for feedback. First may I say, I live closer to Albertsons and Safeway than to Fred Meyers. I do prefer Albertsons over Fred Meyers as the store is a better size (without clothing etc.) and it has a better selection of brand names.

During Covid months, it was apparent to me, that I had better brand name selections and more stocked items at Albertsons. Fred Myers shelves were empty and stayed that way. After Covid I saw that Kroger products started to dominate the shelves. Not good.

I would not support the merging of the two stores under any circumstance. The staff I've spoken with feel the same. Most everyone is not happy with the idea and feels that it will become a monopoly if that happens. If the merger goes through, I will shop at Cartwrights and Winco. Please don't merge Kroger and Albertsons.

Sincerely,
Casey Black
Grants Pass, OR

59. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/23/23

Currently I use Safeway in Tillamook for my immediate and short-term prescriptions after receiving notice that Kroger would no longer accept my prescription coverage. As a widow of a 100% disabled Air Force Veteran, on a limited Survivor Benefits income, I count on Express Scripts for my prescription drug coverage. I'm not too sure where I will get "immediate needed prescriptions" if Kroger does the same thing at "Safeway locations" IF the merger is done. The merger will have a negative impact on my life and well-being.

Sylvia Saddler

60. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/23/23

My wife and I read an article in the December 10, 2023 edition of "The Bulletin" about the merger between Albertsons and Kroger and its potential impact on pharmacies across the state. We are concerned about the impact and wanted to share our concerns.

We are retirees living in Redmond, Oregon. As a Coast Guard veteran, TRICARE Select is our health plan. It has three in-network pharmacies in Redmond: Rite Aid, Safeway, and Walgreens.

Kroger was an in-network pharmacy that we used until they left the network on December 31, 2022. We transferred our prescriptions to Safeway in 2023.

Our biggest concern is access to an in-network pharmacy after the Albertsons-Kroger merger. Will Safeway either close its Redmond store or leave the TRICARE network because of the merger? Will Rite Aid's bankruptcy result in closure of its Redmond store?

Sure, there is Walgreens as an option, but in a rapidly growing city of over 37,000 people, we should have more than one pharmacy option.

We request that a condition of the merger include: 1) keeping the Redmond Safeway store open and 2) having Albertsons (Safeway) remain as a TRICARE in-network pharmacy.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

Sincerely,

Scott and Kathy Larson

61. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/23/23

Rural communities need options to purchase their prescriptions, a merger like the one proposed by Kroger is a monopoly. How can this be legal? Competition is required for an economy to thrive and the People who live in the community to thrive!

62. Subject: Proposed Kroger-Albertsons merger

Received 12/27/23

Hello,

I would like to share a public comment about the proposed merger of Kroger and Albertsons.

I cannot understand how our anti-trust laws have become so watered down that this merger has not been stopped before now. I am thankful that OHA is getting involved because access to pharmacies is already problematic in this post-pandemic reality. Allowing these two mega-corporations to further restrict access is potentially catastrophic to the citizens of Oregon.

I recently moved to Fred Meyer's pharmacy when Walgreen's took over the Bi-Mart pharmacy operation and basically hamstrung the staff so badly that necessary services are basically unavailable from them now - staff shortages, supply shortages, and bad (corporate) management is putting vulnerable people's lives at risk. I don't want to see the same thing happen to the Fred Meyer pharmacy if Kroger goes through with this merger.

Thank you,

Kara Brinkman-Addams

([she/they](#))

63. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/28/23

My name is Mary Powell and I live in Sandy Oregon and I have been very concerned about a merger. We have a Safeway and Fred Meyers as our main retailers and if we lose Safeway Fred Meyer will then have the monopoly here. The Fred Meyers Pharmacy is a nightmare here and if that will be our only option, we will be in trouble. The Sandy Fred Meyers cannot even process the customers they already have. The phones will ring and ring when trying to call in, the Pharmacy outside window is never open.

If you call in a prescription we've been told do not go by when the recording says to pick up but to await instead for a text or email. One time I had to wait 16 days to get a prescription filled as I got 3 messages stating they did not have the medication in and were waiting for arrival. Then days later another delay notice, then a 3rd. I take cancer and heart medications which cannot be having these kind of delays. Thank you for taking the time to ask the people of Oregon they're feelings and concerns.

Mary Powell

64. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/28/23

Hello,

Kroger is already a monopoly, and on those grounds, their latest acquisition should be denied, that's if antitrust laws are being applied as to Sen. Sherman's original intention.

Kroger already owns much of the grocery retail nexus. Quite frankly, it's a joke, as most legacy grocery stores are simply Kroger owned retail outlets for P&G and Unilever. Far from "choice", we have a privately held centralized food system. I suppose it's only a matter of time before Kroger is moving from horizontal monopoly, to vertically integrated monopoly. It would be easy, given how over 90% of our centralized food system is owned by only a few major industrial players, who collude through AgriStats. Why should we let anyone attempt the same to pharmacies?

For about 40 years now, we've suffered under weak antitrust enforcement, along with a narrow view of consumer injury, that fails to take into account anticompetitive impacts on labor, community, environment, quality, culture, and health.

Vertical and horizontal monopoly weakens the majority of us, while enriching the few. Centralizing a vulnerable system into few private hands - nowadays likely owned by Blackrock or Vanguard - turns us all into feudal serfs of sorts, and systemically risks our ruin.

It's time for state and federal agencies, not captured so severely by the ones they're supposed to be regulating, to speak up. It's time for both major political parties to throw off the Bork and "Chicago School" doctrine on antitrust enforcement. Democrats desperately need a new argument. Republicans should be asking themselves questions like, "Why is it that so many people employed by these monopolists - that's if they're "lucky" enough to be employed or not having their job automated out of existence - can't afford to start families?" So there is common ground for action, after all.

As for pharmacies, major chains moved into small towns and pushed local pharmacies out of business. Now those same chains are closing pharmacies in those small towns and rural areas, leaving people to drive greater distances for medicine or making them easy prey for a monopolist like Kroger. Looking at it through simple economics, it does not take a doctorate to see costs increasing to taxpayers, employers, and individuals, while the quality of service and medicines available in local areas declines. We ought to be looking at ways for small, locally owned pharmacies to get back into business.

But that concern, while valid and well founded, is academic and quite frankly, anecdotal, when compared to the larger problem of antitrust laws not being enforced as intended.

From Mars Co and Nestle Purina acquiring most of the major and "natural" pet food brands... and pet diagnostics, and Banfield and VCA veterinary, with compromised vets telling their clients to feed their dogs Purina - which is akin to a medical doctor telling a patient to eat McDonalds - to vertically integrated big tech monopoly (one who has moved in on grocery, too) and Kroger... I could go on, but do you see the problem here?

I think you do see the problem, but you're limited by what you can do at the state level. However, what you can do at the state level to stop the latest consolidation by a monopolist, is something you should do. It's just sad that the federal government, sans the current FTC chair, and approximately 40% of the federal judiciary, indoctrinated by the "Chicago School", has left you hanging to deal with this mess now, after 40 years of weak enforcement.

I wish you luck with it. Until things change in a major way, you'll need it.

Regards,

Paul Ottaviano
Beaverton, OR

65. Subject: Kroger

Received 12/31/23

My concerns over the merger of Kroger and Safeway/Albertson's include the probable increase in grocery prices since there will be little competition. (I do not like Walmart, and find myself shopping more at Winco due to Fred Meyer's increasingly higher prices.) Also what will happen to prescriptions? Fred Meyer is my main prescription provider and is a preferred provider under my insurance, Blue Cross. Safeway is also a preferred provider. But if stores are sold, will the new owner be preferred? If my local Fred Meyer is sold, how far am I going to have to travel to a preferred location? These stores also sell over the counter medications which are advertised weekly. Fred Meyer has stopped sending out its advertisements, they are available on line and at the store. Safeway still provides a weekly advertisement in the mail. I suspect a merger would stop this. I am not very computer adept and presently do not have a cell phone and probably couldn't read an ad on such a small screen anyway. The loss of store advertisements in the mail is most inconvenient for us older folks.

I do not support this merger.

Lynne Hamilton, King City, OR.

66. Subject: Argument AGAINST Kroger-Albertsons

Received 12/31/23

To whom it may concern,

I do not want Kroger to merge with Albertsons. While I love shopping at Kroger stores, my preferred brand, my prescription insurance Express Scripts has chosen to no longer contract with Kroger.

Leaving me with the only option of using Safeway/Albertsons Sav On pharmacies to fill my prescriptions. As there are no other local pharmacies within my Express Script network. We cannot use their mail order pharmacy due to the type of medications we have filled.

If this merger goes through, I will no longer have ANY pharmacies available to me as Kroger and Express Scripts do not have a contract with each other.

Please take this into consideration as I am sure there are others out there facing the same dilemma since Express Scripts decided to end their contract with Kroger.

Thank you for your time.

K.B
Bend, Oregon.

67. Subject: Kroger

Received 1/2/24

I would like to register my objection to the proposed merger. I prefer to have both companies as competitive entities. We do not need to decrease competition in any industry. Please do not let this happen.

Jung Sun Lee
Beaverton Oregon

68. Subject: Kroger

Received 1/3/24

I'm flabbergasted that you're even considering handing Rodney McMullen another gigantic grocery chain. Of course it will impact pharmacies. It may also increase the grocery store deserts here. McMullen and his brethren have been systematically gouging the people of this country for years. AND THE PRICE OF GROCERIES DOESNT COME DOWN. The cost of food is still up by at least 12 to 13%. In some cases, more. McMullen pulls down nearly \$20 MILLION a year. This makes him a rock solid member of the Greedy CEO Club. No wonder we have such a huge population of homeless people. It is a direct result of all the money being at the top. You don't really believe him when he says this will 'benefit' consumers, do you? The man wants a monopoly; why are you even considering handing it to him? I personally can barely stand to walk into a Safeway or a Fred Meyer because of the ongoing rip-off. IS THERE NO CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION in this country anymore? The answer is no.

The grocery industry made at least 2.2 billion in profit last year; Mr McMullen snagged himself a 6% pay raise. Yet he continues to bleed us dry. Are you going to be part of the problem or part of the solution?

69. Subject: No to Kroger/Albertsons Merger!

Received 1/8/24

Attention OHA,

The fact that the OHA is even considering the merger proposal from Kroger to take over Albertson stores in Oregon reeks of a planned monopoly and state control of pharmacies and food suppliers. This is illegal, corrupt, and morally wrong!

Our community of 30,000 plus has already lost all of its independent pharmacies and now only has three pharmacies for not only our town, but the surrounding rural areas. The woeful inadequacy of this can be seen in the long, slow lines at Fred Meyer on a regular basis. People needing medication do not need to stand in long for a prolonged period of time. A merger would only exacerbate this situation.

Fred Meyer has a well-known reputation for repeatedly issuing the wrong medication or messing up prescriptions. We do not need this increased in any way, shape or form.

Limiting the grocery shopping options is not conducive to the health and well-being of Oregonians on multiple levels. When the majority of smaller communities in our county do not have a local grocery store, reducing the options is not helpful.

It is clearly evident that the OHA is not an authority in many respects, but especially when it comes to caring for and protecting the citizens it supposedly serves.

Please spend your time and resources on issues that improve rather than interfere with and reduce the quality of life for us, by refusing to move forward with this insane idea and blocking the proposed merger.

Sincerely,

L.C. Byrd
Newberg, OR

70. Subject: Kroger

Received 1/8/24

I am a resident of Oregon and am greatly upset at the idea of this merger of Kroger with Safeway. At this point in my area. I already have lost ability to have the choice of pharmacies except Fred Meyer, Safeway and Walgreens. If this merger takes place it greatly limits consumers even more on pharmacy choice. This is a very bad plan in allowing competition not only in pharmaceutical products but also grocery items.

Please do not allow this merger to take place.

Carrie McNeal
[personal information redacted]
Dundee, Oregon *[personal information redacted]*

71. Subject: Kroger Albertsons merger

Received 1/10/24

I am writing about the merger of Kroger and Albertson. This will have a devastating effect in my community. I live in Newberg. We have already lost 4 pharmacies in the past several years. We only have 3 pharmacies left that most of the community can access. (Most of the community cannot use the Virginia Garcia pharmacy). The Fred Myer pharmacy has had problems for

years. Now that we only have a few pharmacies they often have a long line. Walgreens has also been struggling and has long lines and not enough staff. My son recently went to pick up a prescription, waited about an hour and then was told that they had closed and he would need to come back another time. Safeway is across the street from Fred Myer. They don't have as long of lines and I have had no problems with their pharmacy. With Kroger taking over I am very concerned with the problems of Fred Myer's pharmacy transferring to Safeway's pharmacy. With the merger, they will not have 2 stores in such close proximity and we will be down to 2 pharmacies. The community cannot adequately get their pharmacy needs met with only 2 pharmacies. We are struggling with only 3 pharmacies available. This will basically give them a monopoly in this area. We need more pharmacies and competition, not less.

Judy

72. Subject: Kroger

Received 1/23/24

I oppose the Kroger/Albertson's merger specifically because of the impact it would have on pharmacy customers, pharmacy practitioners and pharmacy students. The ways this merger would have a negative impact on the first two of those populations is abundantly clear and need not be addressed in this comment. As someone who formerly helped to create and managed the clinical pharmacy curriculums for two universities' Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) programs here in Oregon, I think it important that the impact on training future pharmacists be carefully considered. These students, as part of their academic progression, must undertake required clinical experiential training, much of which takes place in community pharmacy settings, the vast majority of which are in large chains (Fred's, Safeway, Albertson's, etc.). Twenty years ago, it was hard enough to find enough quality rotations with suitable preceptors for the number of students in the state. Any consolidation which reduces the number of experiential sites will negatively impact students by reducing their available training options, precepting pharmacists by asking too much of them in their already over-burdened profession, and the patient population by possibly reducing or delaying the flow of new practitioners through the bottleneck created by a merger that would reduce adequate training sites for those future practitioners. At a time when the public is increasingly looking to their community pharmacists for clinical care, any decrease in the number of settings where that care can be provided should be carefully considered.

Robert L. Rucker

73. Subject: Kroger

Received 1/23/24

We ask that the merger not be allowed to happen. We see only harm to people and communities. The proposed merger comes as many people are losing access to neighborhood pharmacies. The arguments against dwarf any positive attributes to the merger. We post this but wonder if public comment will have any effect on the decision.

Paul & Dawn Trimble

74. Subject: Albertsons and Kroger Buy Out and Pharmacies

Received 2/7/24

To Whom this may concern,

As a consumer of pharmacy services in Oregon State, I am concerned over the buyout impact on the personalized services and the quality of medication I received due to the use of Artificial Intelligence in pharmacies.

I would like to see a study of AI and its use on pharmacy, ethics, who is using this information and with whom it is shared.

Pharmacies contracting with China are obligated to report data with the Chinese government.

Currently there are US governments committees that are looking into sanctions for China due to the medications being laced or contaminated with fentanyl.

More than 4 medications are used by Medicare and medical recipients with many vulnerable and elderly populations that have an increase in fentanyl use and increase in death rates.

Oregon should maintain its pride on LOCAL business and look after the safety, welfare and health of the citizens Oregon Government and Authorities serve: Citizens.

75. Subject: Kroger

Received 2/17/24

Gotta laugh because the Albertsons in McMinnville Oregon checkers say they are against the merger with Kroger. Perhaps this explains the mismanagement going on in this Albertsons?

Kroger has a mutiny before its merger....

76. Subject: Kroger

Received 2/20/24

Based on a recent news story Oregon is still "reviewing" the Kroger and Albertson's potential merger which many states, such as Washington had decided against the merger. I've also seen the Union support and the PR response from Kroger in favor of the merger. The Union support I'm disappointed in but if you think about it they will potentially add to their base. The Kroger PR totally expected and in my opinion more lie than truth.

The world we currently live in the Corporations make many many money decisions at the expense of their workers and consumers. This, in my opinion, is another such situation. Not only will there be less grocery choices in terms of who provides the choices but they will also close down many stores to cut costs. This will mean less people will have employment and consumers will have less choices. This also means there will be an increase to the prices of the product.

All this should be quite obvious. I'm sure some sort of economics 101 course. The other states denying this understand.

Unfortunately in the climate we currently live in, greed and "kingship" approach to leadership, I'm hoping their your "reviewing" this merger isn't something that supports this merger for some sort of personal gain. I appreciate my indelicate way of doubting your integrity and support of the people of this state is something to be offended by. My apologies for that, but please don't let it be true.

Thank you for your time.

Colleen Keller

77. Subject: Kroger-Albertsons Potential is Very Bad for Consumers!

Received 4/5/24

Hello,

A Kroger-Albertson merger would be really bad news for consumers, a trap waiting to snap shut on common shoppers. Small towns across the nation would be faced with only one choice for their basic grocery needs. No comparison shopping allowed! No union bargaining power for workers! No recourse for consumer complaints, employee safety complaints! Gone! Poof!

Investors will be lining their pockets with the sweat, tears and life's blood earnings of the trapped grocery shoppers. The investors' chorus "we don't care, we don't have to, give us your money or your life, suckers! " will ring from every small town, med-sized hamlet or out lying suburban community. It will ring from every bell tower in the land, " we don't care, we don't have to, give us your money or your life, suckers! "

This kind of merger Kills trade. This kind of merger kills competition. This kind of merger kills communities.

The OHA must act in the best interest of real people, real communities, and disapprove this very bad ideal of a "deal." By the way, remember that the title "Act of the Deal" was written by a "ghost writer." Poof.

Thank you for your time. Thank you for listening. We are watching.

Karen

78. Subject: [Omitted]

Received 4/11/24

You'd better make the meetings virtual otherwise you will be overrun with the townspeople wielding pitchforks and torches. A whole proposed merger is bullshit and you know it. How do you think it would affect their pharmacies? How do you think it would affect anything or any person? In the marketplace? Do you really not know? You should be embarrassed to ask a question like that.....

79. Subject: Kroger merger!

Received 4/11/24

No way should it be consolidated!

80. Subject: Proposed Kroger/Albertsons Merger

Received 4/11/24

As a senior Oregon citizen buying groceries and medications through both store chains in my area, I appreciate that current pricing competition for customers helps curb price increases.

Please do not allow them to merge.

Sincerely,

Connard Rasmussen

[personal information redacted]

Molalla, OR

81. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/11/24

Good evening,

I was a pharmacist in charge of one of the busiest Fred Meyer/ Kroger pharmacies in the state for over 10 years and a pharmacist for 37 years. Last year my store finished near the top of the district for obtaining/ exceeding cooperate goals. I recently resigned from the company due to the ever increasing cooperate pressure / demands / expectations that are not obtainable with the current allocated labor models. The merger will further place even more burdens on current pharmacy teams. There are plenty of staff but the company refuses to hire for a variety of rational. Cooperations refuse to staff to safe minimum levels. They push the more profitable services, vaccines and clinical mtms, over filling prescriptions. We were continually pressed to prioritize vaccines and clinical over filling prescriptions resulting in delayed care. Additionally, Kroger refuses some insurance contracts.

82. Subject: Opposed to merger

Received 4/11/24

So far in my lifetime which has been pretty long, I have never seen a merger that "customers" benefited from. I wish we had not lost the BiMart pharmacies. I transferred my prescriptions to Albertsons. It's been a poor second choice but I don't see any other options. Walgreens is terrible. Rite Aid used to be great and it isn't any more.

I doubt strongly that any merger will improve pharmacy services nor improve prices or variety of products in the stores.

Kathleen McKinney
[personal information redacted]
McMinnville, OR

83. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/11/24

Regarding pharmacy access if a merger occurs, while Kroger may say that they will keep the pharmacies open, my concern is that they may not take the insurance that I have. Currently Kroger's in Sandy Oregon does not take my Blue Cross. Safeway does.

Mary Fitzgerald

84. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/11/24

The State of Oregon and OHA should not only be concerned about the loss of pharmacies but they should also require Kroger/Albertson's to re-establish grocery stores in "food deserts" left by their retreat from distressed neighborhoods. Kroger, Albertson's and Safeway should be investing in low-income neighborhoods. When they leave it just worsens everything for the people left behind.

85. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/11/24

Kroger's Fred Meyer on 172nd and Sunnyside in Clackamas was the last store of my local grocers I visit(Safeway and New Seasons) to have employees provided and even menially enforced with masks to comply with state regulations during the pandemic, the last to have safety devices for their workers such as sneeze guards during the Covid epidemic—it was mid 2021 when most of their employees could be seen complying with state regulations. New Seasons and Trader joes had these implemented 9-12 months before Fred Meyer/Kroger. I would have loved to have stopped shopping there completely—but---being one of few grocers I have the choice of visiting within 5 miles, I was forced to endure their flaunting of state guidelines so they could save pennies at the store level on masks and safety for their employees and customers.

Kroger cuts corners wherever it can, at the cost of the health and safety of its employees and customers. They are not fit to run their own stores, from a safety perspective, let absorb others and spread their appalling health and management practices. I cannot even begin to fathom how terrifying it would be to depend on their management practices for pharmaceutical needs.

NO.

Happy Valley Resident

86. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/11/24

To Whom It May Concern at the Health Care Market Oversight Community Review Board:

I'm a 74 year old retired occupational therapist who lives in Eugene. I've studied health care reform since the 1990's. I've seen health care from provider, consumer, and small business owner perspectives. A merger of Kroger and Albertson's would be a negative for all the communities who would be affected by the increased prices due to decreased competition.

Increased corporate profits result in higher executive pay and decreased attention to customer service. Please do not approve the merger. Both corporations are large enough now.

Charlotte Maloney
Eugene, OR

87. Subject: Fred Meyer Safeway Albertsons Proposed Merger Opposition

Received 4/11/24

Having a home in North Portland there are only a few option for economical shopping with 2 Fred Meyer and 1 Safeway. There are 2 New Seasons, which are beyond my budget. There are few pharmacies left in the area too with Rite Aid closing before the pandemic, leaving Walgreens the only competition. With Walmart also shuttered on Hayden Meadows, there is little to no competition for North Portland. Even crossing the 5 freeway or going to downtown would include 6 Safeways and 4 Fred Meyers. There is Whole Foods, but that also way out of budget. With that said there would be no economical competition left within a 7-mile radius. I oppose this merger as it would create a monopoly in the region.

Daniel Drake
[personal information redacted]
Portland, OR

88. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/11/24

As a Beaverton local for 8 years. I have purchased my groceries by bike from both Fred Meyers and Safeway as WinCo is out of my range, both offer their own versions of store brand products at reduced prices, the products taste and price differently across stores, how do i know that with a merger i won't lose out on a better deal or a preferred flavor?

89. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/11/24

Hello

I'm a resident of Corvallis and I urge you to not allow the Kroger/Safeway merger as it will have a negative economic impact to Corvallis as well as likely have 1-2 pharmacies closed which will significantly reduce options as well as have a negative impact to the disadvantaged in our city as well it doesn't take into account the expected growth in Corvallis over the next 10 years with over 3000 homes in the works right now.

Please do not approve this merger.

Kind regards

Laurie Chaplen

90. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/11/24

Hello,

Thank you for examining the proposed merger of Kroger and Safeway. This would be a disaster for consumers here in Oregon. It would create an effective monopoly and result in price increases and declines in quality. This is the reason we have anti-trust measures in the first place, to prevent this kind of consolidation. Taking the company's word for it that it will not close pharmacies would be naive; they will do whatever they want after the deal is done. The Northwest has already seen this with previous merges.

Regards,

Beth Jameson
Lake Oswego

91. Subject: Kroger/Albertsons Merger

Received 4/12/24

Hi

I'm writing to share my opinion that the proposed merger of Kroger & Albertsons should not be allowed to happen. There are too many unknowns as to how this will eventually roll out and what negative effects it will have on the citizens of Oregon, and other states. When a pharmacy or grocery store closes in an area or a neighborhood, there are severe impacts on people, some of which may endanger a person directly or put unnecessary obstacles in the way of a person who needs RX's filled and to get food.

We live in a time where consolidation of corporations (i.e., monopolies) rule the roost. I live in Eugene and was recently affected by the closure of an Oregon Medical Group clinic, leaving myself and my husband, both seniors, without a primary care provider. We've been in Eugene for 2.5 years and this makes the 4th time we've had to seek a new PCP.

There is no other reason for Kroger to merge with Albertson's, other than money and profit. Regular folks get left behind without a second thought.

I urge you voice a NO on this merger in the name of care and compassion for the residents of Oregon.

Thank you,

Diana Pierce
Eugene

92. Subject: The link, "Learn More Here" and Comments on the Proposed Kroger-Albertsons merger

Received 4/12/24

Subject link is, apparently not functioning.

Would this merger, if approved, be in compliance with existing anti-monopoly laws?

93. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/12/24

Regarding the proposed merger of Kroger and Albertsons, I have significant concerns regarding reduction in pharmacy options near me. I receive Medicare and am 69 years old. Previously I used a nearby Walgreens' pharmacy but their waiting lines were often over an hour long plus they routinely made errors in orders, I suspect due to staffing shortages. I switched my prescriptions to Albertsons' also near my home and the service is excellent. I have Type 1 Diabetes, and require a variety of prescription items including syringes and more. Krogers' pharmacy does not have a contract with Cigna, my Medicare Insurance pharmacy plan. So the merger would require me to travel at least 20 to 30 minutes each way to refill prescriptions if Albertsons changes to Kroger regarding such contracts with insurance. I also require a prescription the mail order services do not offer, so a neighborhood option is a necessity.

Thank-you for attending to my concerns about the merger and the need to increased versus decreased options.

Judy Harris
[personal information redacted]
Portland, OR

94. Subject: Opposed

Received 4/12/24

I am strongly opposed to the Albertsons Kroger merger, believing it will decrease competition and thus raise prices as well as closing stores.

Fran Collins

[personal information redacted]

Portland, Oregon

95. Subject: Merger Albertson's and Kroger

Received 4/12/24

thI am not a fan of these mergers. They almost always result in loss of service, loss of jobs, and often a decline in product availability. And sometimes the stronger of the two will "eat" the other and the overall result is negative.

Witness the stress and tension that is playing out in Eugene, OR since United Health Care bought Oregon Medical Group. What do we have now—besides a rapid loss of medical personnel, reduced medical support at most levels, and a palpable change in the quality of care that an overstressed and an under-supported staff can provide. I've already experienced this.

What can we expect to happen, should these two mega-corporations become one great big server across the region? Nothing good, IMHO.

Carol Pratt

Eugene

96. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/12/24

Greetings.

In the *Oregonian* this morning were several articles about the proposed merger between Kroger and Albertsons. One of them noted that written comments could be sent to this e-mail address. We appreciate that Oregon has challenged this move, along with other states. We are categorically opposed to this merger, as it will be damaging to consumers in a variety of ways.

We live on the North Coast, where our primary shopping options are two Safeway stores (Astoria and Seaside) and one Fred Meyer in Warrenton, which both serve a similar customer base and are direct competitors. The Walmart and Grocery Outlet serve bargain hunters who are satisfied with a limited selection of grocery items. Costco offers bulk products. Natural Grocers and the Astoria CoOp are much smaller, more expensive stores, also with limited selections.

Kroger's prescription drug prices are significantly higher than Safeway's. Our estimate is that our drug prices will go up several hundred dollars a year if Kroger takes over Safeway pharmacies. However, our primary objection to the merger is that Safeway and Kroger carry

different items, especially store brands. We depend on the Safeway brand for cereal, canned tomatoes, fresh organic orange juice, dairy products, and many others. Safeway has a much better selection of specialty cheeses, while Kroger tends to carry a wider variety of ingredients for baking and higher quality meat. We shop at both stores and want them to continue as they are now.

Thanks for soliciting public comments.

Sara Vickerman-Gage and Jeff Gage
[personal information redacted]
Gearhart, Oregon

97. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/12/24

Thank you for your request for opinions on the proposed Albertsons Fred Meyers merge. I've sent in my opinion prior to this and will restate it again. I do not want to see that happen. There is no reason for it. Kroger is not my favorite store. During the pandemic, they were not stocked and when they did get stock, it was Kroger brand products. I don't live near the Fred Meyers store and shop at Albertsons. I can find what I need (although it seems that all stores now prefer to carry their store brand of particular items) and don't travel far to do it. We don't need another Monopoly or Fred Meyers being "the store" in town. If that happens I will shop at Winco or Cartwrights and boycott Fred Meyers.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Casey B.
Grants Pass, OR

98. Subject: Merger

Received 4/12/24

I am a senior living on a very strict income, grocery prices are ridiculously high and rising in some cases. When one company controls the prices of most of the area grocery stores, it does not bode well for consumers. Will prices be high, like Safeway, or more reasonable like Fred Meyer?

99. Subject: A customer and Oregon citizen very against the merger of Kroger and Albertsons

Received 4/12/24

To whom it may concern,

I would like to strongly voice my opposition to the merger of Kroger and Albertsons, as it relates to the pharmacies merging as well as the grocery stores merging. As a mother who works part time due to chronic health issues, I struggle to pay for grocery bills which have risen dramatically due to inflation and the pandemic. I carefully shop the sales each week at Alberstons/Safeway and Fred Meyers/Kroger, and without these sale coupons and deep discounts due to competition we would

be paying probably double what we pay for groceries and medicine. Our family cannot afford to shop at Whole Foods, New Seasons, and other grocery stores in the area because they are simply too expensive. The competition between Kroger and Alberstons allows me to buy things on sale at those two stores, and stock up on items when they are on sale to help reduce the costs. If these two grocery/pharmacy giants were to merge, I would be forced to shop at a store without any real competition, and I'm really afraid of how high our grocery and pharmacy costs would be. We are already trying so hard to reduce our grocery and pharmacy budget, and do without many of the foods, supplements, and medicines that we were able to purchase before the pandemic and inflation.

Please, please block this merger. In Oregon it amounts to a grocery, and most likely pharmacy, monopoly in the region that we as customers simply cannot afford.

Thank you for considering our opinion.

Harding Family,
Portland, OR

100. Subject: Opposition to the Merger of Kroger and Albertsons

Received 4/12/24

I have already noticed a big difference in competition between the local Safeway and Fred Meyer prices since the announced merger. I have noticed fewer and fewer price wars. I been monitoring the weekly ads for the past 10 years so the trend of fewer sales is glaring.

Please do not allow the two companies to merge.

Martin DeVall
Oregon City, OR
[Personal information redacted]

101. Subject: Albertsons/Kroger Merger

Received 4/12/24

I don't know if this is the right place to make a statement but I am adamantly opposed to this merger for the simple reason that combining these two giants would vastly reduce competition and make it way too easy for these guys to manipulate prices in their favor.

John Altshuler
Eugene

102. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/14/24

I am writing to submit comments regarding the proposed merger of Kroger and Albertsons. I understand the OHA will be holding a virtual public hearing this month. I am opposed to the merger. I live in a semi-rural area of Oregon and the choices for grocery stores and pharmacies are

limited already. Further reducing the number of stores would be harmful to the people in this region. In addition, the merger would eliminate the competition that now exists between Albertsons/Safeway and Kroger/Fred Meyer. I shop at both stores and enjoy the sales as they compete against one another. As far as pharmacies are specifically concerned, we've already had issues with closures in our region which have made it more difficult for people to get prescriptions in a timely manner, not to mention the need to wait in long lines to do so.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

Jody Conrad
Merlin, Oregon

103. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/14/24

I am against the Kroger, Albertsons merger-buyout.

Please carefully examine the Albertsons buyout of Safeway.

Specifically the permanent loss of stores. And stores with pharmacies. Examples are my local Albertsons in West Linn. Blankenship Rd. It is now a Hardware store. This put our other Hardware Store out of business.

The two Safeways in Klamath Falls were permanently closed. K Falls is an Under Served community. I worked at Safeway (41 years). The Albertsons store on Sunnyside Rd. and 147th on the south edge of Happy Valley, closed and is now a Grocery Outlet store with NO pharmacy. Albertsons at that location had a full pharmacy.

Breaking up Walmart makes more sense than more mergers.

Thanks

Contact me if you like.

[Personal information redacted]

104. Subject: Opposition to the Merger of Kroger and Albertsons

Received 4/15/24

We also use our local Safeway for all our Prescriptions, spending over \$1000 per year. We once used our local Bi-Mart store for all of our prescriptions, but had to switch to Safeway when our local Bi-Mart Pharmacy closed a few years ago. I do not want our local Safeway Pharmacy to close too.

Martin DeVall

105. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/15/24

I STRENUOUSLY OBJECT TO THIS MERGER.

I AM A SNOWBIRD. BOTH TOWNS I LIVE IN WOULD BE TREMENDOUSLY IMPACTED BY THIS MERGER.

IN COOS BAY, OREGON THERE ARE TWO SAFEWAY'S AND ONE KROGER. NO OTHER COMPETITION EXCEPT SMALL STORE.

IN LAKE HAVASU CITY, ARIZONA, ONE SAFEWAY, ONE ALBERTSONS AND ONE KROGER WITHIN 1.5 MILES OF EACH OTHER. ONE OTHER MARKET APPROXIMATELY 5 MILES AWAY AND ANOTHER APPROXIMATELY 3 MILES AWAY.

THIS MERGER WILL EFFECTIVELY REMOVE COMPETITION IN THESE TWO CITIES.

NEIL ORNSTEIN

106. Comment transcribed from voicemail message

Received 4/11/24 via voicemail

Hi,

I'm calling about your upcoming Zoom meeting regarding the Kroger merger with Safeway. Yeah, it's already merged with Albertson's, so we don't need anymore. First of all, I'm absolutely, one hundred percent, vehemently opposed to Kroger soon to be folded into this already insanity. As regards to pharmacy, I left Safeway about a decade ago because they were so limited in their offerings. I might lose one or more of my current scripts if this goes through. But overall, look, I can literally walk to the downtown Safeway but still I'll take mass transit to the Kroger up on West Burnside rather than shop there under at least ninety percent of the circumstances.

A merger such as this will literally kill virtually all competition. Prices will go up. Quality will go further down, and offerings will continue to shrink. If I may share a little less-known-secret, perhaps, that Safeway's generic items are practically devoid of flavor. Hello! Boring! Ick! No thank you!

And while I can't speak about how the staff might be treating the patrons at all the Safeway stores, the ways we are literally treated at the downtown stores is like we're criminals first and then maybe we're humans later. In fact, at Safeway it's downright abominable. Now Fred Meyer's did just recently institute a show-me-your-receipt type policy, but Safeway won't even allow you to bring your backpack or large purse into their store. They insist you leave it with a clerk behind their counter as if they can be keeping an eye on everything all the time. But you even have to give them your picture ID now just to use their power handicap carts. So let me tell you a little story about that. One day I went in, and they asked to see my ID. I thought I was just going to hand it to her to look at and then grab it back so that's what I did, and she goes "No, we're going to keep it until you're done." I didn't like it, but I was kind of in a pinch, so I said, "Okay." Well, I got about half way down an aisle and the thing went dead on me. So, I'm stuck sitting there with an electric cart that I didn't dare leave in case someone else came along and got it working and then went out the

door with it and I'm stuck paying for it. So, I'm just sitting there, sitting there, sitting there, sitting there for about ten minutes. Finally, I went up to the place where they were keeping my ID and got their attention. But this is just ridiculous. How rude can you be to people? I don't ever want to go there. You better not merge them. This is just ridiculous. Kroger is the last best thing we have against Safeway and Albertson's. Please, don't do it.

Thank you. Bye.

107. Subject: Kroger-Albertsons Merger

Received 4/16/24

I live in Florence on the coast. The population is an estimated 10,000 in the city limits. Outside the city limits commerce supports many small jurisdictions. In the last 18 months, Rite Aid and BiMart pharmacies have closed. Now three pharmacies exist in Florence: Fred Meyer-Krogers, Safeway-Albertsons and the High School Pharmacy. If Fred Meyer or Safeway were to close, the area population would be in a health crisis. The closure of Rite Aid and BiMart are already causing pharmaceutical disparity in the form of long lines and supply shortages. Oregon has a great opportunity to fight the looming health crisis. Oregon Healthcare Market Oversight Program is a pathway for Oregon to fight against a major healthcare crisis.

Sincerely,

Linda Newton

[Personal information redacted]

Private Citizen

108. Subject: Kroger, Albertsons merger: Pharmacy effect

Received 4/16/24

Hello. I would be interested to know the plan r/t insurance acceptance. Kroger doesn't accept Express Scripts and I, like many others will not have any place local to fill prescriptions and no easy means to get out of town (Seaside or Lincoln City). Mail order is not an option r/t limitations of what meds can be mailed (controlled) and pricing.

Thank you.

Patricia Seltzer

109. Subject: Kroger-Albertsons Community Review Board public hearing April 24, 2024

Received 4/19/24

Hello HCMO –

I saw OHA's emailed notice (below) about HCMO's April 24 hearing about the proposed merger between Kroger and Albertsons.

Can you tell me please – if this merger were approved, how might it affect Postal Prescription Services (PPS) mail order pharmacy (www.ppsrx.com), which is based in Portland, Oregon and owned by Kroger? PPS's customers include thousand of people in Oregon who have prescription drug insurance through public and private employer group health plans, and thousands of people in Washington and many other states too.

Thank you so much. --Robert

Robert Gassner

- concerned resident of Portland, Oregon
- user of mail order pharmacy services
- employee of Moda Health

110. Subject: Kroger - opposed to Kroger and Albertson's merger

Received 4/19/24

I am very much opposed to the Kroger and Albertson's merger. I live in the rural Lincoln Beach community in Lincoln County. Our county greatly suffered when BiMart closed all of its pharmacies. I preferred BiMart because its lines were shorter, operations smoother, medications more affordable, and it was much easier to get shots. Merging Kroger and Albertsons would decrease our options for buying prescriptions, increase wait times, and increase prices. Given the number of retirees and working poor in Lincoln County the merger would be yet another hardship.

Suzan Sachdeva

111. Subject: Albertsons-Kroger merger

Received 4/20/24

This is a terrible idea – history tells us it will result in more food deserts with closed neighborhood stores (and pharmacies) and will reduce competition driving prices upward. Many struggle to feed our families now... we need more competition not less to keep prices down...more stores not fewer to serve all populations... and not everything has to be a huge mega-store which the elderly and/or disabled have very difficult times navigating as many of us cannot walk the distances required in

huge parking lots and inside store proper to manage these huge stores. When we cannot manage available groceries we are left with convenience stores where prices are often outrageous and food quality in the tank ... Kroger and Albertson can manage without this merger, many of us citizens cannot.

Thank you for allowing me to speak my piece,

Betty Nelson

112. Subject: drug prices at Kroger

Received 4/21/24

Kroger and Albertson's should not be allowed to merge. The history of mergers like this is that citizens bear the brunt of higher prices and less service. Employees, too, can end up with fewer protections and lower income. The US continues to be one of the least equal western countries when it comes to wealth and health.

Dell Goldsmith
Portland, OR

113. Subject: Merger Kroger-Albertsons

Received 4/23/24

Hi,

I live in a coastal town in Oregon where there is a Safeway and Fred Meyers. They are across the street from each other. If merged, it is highly likely one of the stores will be closed. Living on the coast is great for outdoor beauty and adventure but it's not great for shopping, actually very limited options exist. Many people drive inland for an hour periodically to get groceries. Closing another store would be terrible, reducing choices in an already limited marketplace. Please do not allow this merger to happen.

thank you

Herb Fredricksen
[Personal information redacted]
Newport, OR

114. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/23/24

I would like to comment that I am AGAINST the merger of Kroger and Albertson's.

I live in Newport Oregon. We have two main grocery shopping stores, Safeway and Fred Meyer. They are right across the street from one another. There would be absolutely NO competition in Newport if they were one entity.

Personally I used to shop Fred Meyer, but now shop Safeway more. They have comparable prices, but I like the Safeway (lucerne) products better than Fred Meyer, especially the dairy products. Safeway also has a better rewards system for me. The fuel points are pointless for Fred Meyer as we have EVs, but at least Safeway offers grocery rewards.

I hope you will remember that small towns need healthy competition and we do not need a monopoly here.

I am speaking for both me and my husband.

Sincerely,

Theresa and Rex Capri
Newport, OR

115. Subject: KROGER-ALBERTSONS merger

Received 4/23/24

How many pharmacies will close per year in the next 5 years due to this merger?

Brian Laney, CPhT
Salem Hospital Retail Pharmacy

116. Subject: Kroger

Received 4/23/24

My husband and I, both in our 80s and residents of NE Portland for more than 53 years, have great concern about the Kroger – Albertsons merger.

- 1) **Tricare for Life** is our medical insurance plan. Jim served well over 20 years in the Air Force. We used to conveniently get our flu shots and other vaccinations at our nearby Fred Meyer or QFC. However, a few years ago **we got notice that Fred Meyer/Kroger would no longer accept our insurance**. We were referred to Rite Aid, another nearby pharmacy, and that store has closed. We can still get vaccinations at Safeway, but suspect if the merger is allowed, that will no longer be the case.

- 2) More and more, Fred Meyer is taking over shelves with Kroger brand products, either totally discontinuing or relegating to a small shelf space and/or bottom shelf other popular brands. We no longer have the choices in products we had in the past, and we consider most Kroger brand products to be inferior to other nationally recognized brands.

We sincerely hope that the Kroger-Albertsons merger will not be allowed. Thank you for your efforts on our behalf.

Jim and Judy Kennedy

Portland OR

117. Subject: Support for Efficient Oversight in Kroger-Albertsons Merger

Received 4/23/24

Dear Oregon Health Authority,

I am reaching out as a senior citizen from the Portland suburbs, and I want to express my hopeful support regarding the Kroger-Albertsons merger. As someone who depends on reliable and affordable access to groceries and medications, the potential benefits of this merger resonate deeply with me.

I appreciate the Oregon Health Authority's diligence in reviewing this merger, recognizing the importance of maintaining access and affordability in our communities. It is comforting to know that our state is actively involved in ensuring that our needs are considered alongside federal oversight efforts.

However, I also wish to convey my trust in the comprehensive evaluations already being conducted by federal bodies like the Federal Trade Commission. With this in mind, I hope that our state's valuable resources are utilized efficiently, complementing rather than duplicating federal efforts. It's important that we focus on enhancing the benefits of such initiatives without unnecessary expenditures, especially when many other local concerns could use immediate attention and support.

I am optimistic about the positive changes the Kroger-Albertsons merger could bring to Oregonians like myself, particularly in terms of keeping life's essentials within reach for those of us on fixed incomes. I look forward to the outcomes of your thoughtful and thorough review, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share my perspective.

Thank you for your dedication to the well-being of all Oregon residents.

Warm regards,

Jeanie M

118. Subject: Kroger-Albertsons merger

Received 4/23/24

Dear Oregon Health Authority,

I am writing to express my unequivocal support for the proposed merger between Kroger and Albertsons and to request the opportunity to speak at the upcoming public hearing on this matter.

As an African American resident of Oregon, I am acutely aware of the longstanding disparities in access to essential services, including grocery shopping and pharmacy needs, that communities of color face across the state. The Kroger-Albertsons merger promises to preserve union jobs and maintain, if not enhance, access to these crucial services, aligning with the needs and priorities of our community.

While I appreciate the Oregon Health Authority's commitment to thorough market oversight, I must question the priority of debating this merger given the agency's track record with handling various public health crises. In times when decisive action was required, there has often been a noted shortfall in effectiveness and management. It is crucial that we focus our resources on initiatives that have tangible benefits for community welfare and economic stability.

I believe that this merger holds the potential to significantly improve access to necessary goods and services for marginalized communities in Oregon. I urge the OHA to consider these factors with the weight they deserve and to recognize the positive impact this merger could have.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to further discuss this at the hearing.

Sincerely,

Tim Kamp

119. Subject: Kroger Merger

Received 4/23/24

Dear Oregon Health Authority,

I'm a young Oregonian writing about the Kroger-Albertsons merger. While I see the potential benefits in terms of access, I'm genuinely concerned about maintaining healthy competition in our marketplace.

As a member of Gen Z, I believe it's crucial to preserve competition, especially for essentials like prescription drugs. This merger could greatly impact our options and I urge OHA to work collaboratively with federal agencies to ensure that our market remains competitive and serves the best interests of all Oregonians.

Thank you for considering our perspectives as you evaluate this significant decision.

Best,

Conrad R.

May 8, 2024

120. Subject: Merger-Kroger/Albertsons

Received 4/24/24

Dear Oregon Health Authority,

I am reaching out to express my unequivocal support for the proposed merger between Kroger and Albertsons. As a woman and a small business owner in the Portland Suburbs, I see this merger as an essential development for enhancing access to essential grocery and pharmacy services in our community. The Kroger-Albertsons merger holds significant potential to preserve and possibly expand union jobs, which is crucial for our local economy. Moreover, it promises to improve access to necessary services for all communities, including those that have historically been underserved.

While I recognize the Oregon Health Authority's role in the health and safety regulations, I am concerned that undo focus on past shortcomings during events like the pandemic might overshadow the potential benefits of this merger. It is vital to advance this merger without delay, as it aligns with the needs and priorities of our communities.

I urge the Oregon Health Authority to consider the widespread support for this merger from community members such as myself, who see its potential to bring positive change. Let us move forward and realize the benefits that this merger can bring,

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Melissa A

121. Subject: Kroger-Albertsons merger

Received 4/25/24

I support the proposed merger between Kroger and Albertsons, two grocery chains that play a vital role in our community. Having lived in Oregon for many years, I have witnessed the positive impact of these stores on our local economy and the well-being of our residents.

The merger offers several benefits, including job security for employees. Kroger and Albertsons have committed to retaining all frontline associates and maintaining existing collective bargaining agreements, which is essential for the thousands of workers who depend on these jobs to support themselves and their families.

Additionally, the merger has the potential to improve services and lower prices for families like mine. By joining forces, Kroger and Albertsons can leverage their combined resources to invest in technology, infrastructure, and innovation, ultimately improving the shopping experience for customers.

I believe that the Oregon Health Authority should approve the merger, recognizing its potential to benefit both employees and consumers in our state. This merger represents an opportunity to strengthen our local economy, support our communities.

McKenzie T

122. Subject: Kroger Merger Hearing

Received 4/24/24

I know the important role that local grocery stores play in supporting our neighborhoods. Beyond simply providing food and household goods, these stores serve as flagships that bolster the local economy, create jobs, and foster a sense of belonging among residents.

A large reason I support the Kroger-Albertsons merger is to maintain community access to groceries. In many neighborhoods, especially those without large retail chains, these stores serve as lifelines for residents, offering not just food but also essential household items and a sense of community. Additionally, the merged Kroger-Albertsons entity will have greater bargaining power with suppliers. This leverage can translate into expanded product offerings, providing customers with a more diverse selection of goods to choose from, including specialty and local products. This merger would allow our local grocers to stay open, provide local jobs and offer lower prices. Kroger has also stated that they will not close stores and no employees will lose their jobs.

Both Kroger and Albertsons have a history of community involvement and philanthropy. The merger presents an opportunity to amplify these efforts, with a larger combined entity having the capacity to invest more significantly in local communities through charitable initiatives, sponsorships, and partnerships.

It is imperative that we prioritize the needs of residents who rely on these stores for their daily sustenance. Ensuring continued access to affordable groceries should be a non-negotiable aspect of any agreement reached. I fully support this merger in the interest of community well-being.

Meg Hodson

123. Subject: Kroger merger

Received 4/25/24

As someone who lives in a small community with both a Safeway and a Fred Meyer, I am happy to know that Fred Meyer does not plan to close stores as a result of the merger. I also appreciate that they're protecting local jobs and access to groceries in places like my community. These stores are important to our community and if one were to close, it would be a major hardship for local workers and consumers. I support the Kroger-Albertsons merger. Thank you!

124. Subject: Kroger Public Hearing

Received 4/25/24

As a resident of Oregon, I support the Kroger-Albertsons merger because it promises to preserve jobs and is supported by the employees of these stores. It will also benefit both employees and consumers with continued access to necessary products and prescription drugs since Kroger has committed to not close any stores.

125. Subject: Kroger public comment

Received 4/25/24

As a realtor deeply invested in Happy Valley and Clackamas County and an active member of the Happy Valley Business Alliance, I would like to share my perspective on the proposed merger between Kroger (Fred Meyer) and Albertsons.

When I first heard about the merger, the idea of two large organizations merging seemed concerning, making two big stores even bigger. As I learned more about the dynamics of the grocery market, particularly with the rise of discount stores like Walmart, Amazon, and others, the rationale behind this merger became clearer. I was shocked just how much larger Walmart and Amazon truly were.

The drastic increase in market share of discount stores has significantly impacted traditional grocery retailers like Kroger and Albertsons. This merger presents an opportunity for Kroger to adapt and continue to serve communities in Oregon and across the country. By joining forces, Kroger can pool resources and better compete in a market increasingly dominated by larger players.

Importantly, the merger will enable Kroger to invest more in our local stores, offering price reductions that benefit consumers and communities alike. This investment is crucial for Clackamas County, where access to affordable groceries is essential for residents' well-being.

I also appreciate Kroger's commitment to not close any stores or lose any jobs as a result of the merger. This demonstrates a dedication to maintaining the fabric of our communities and preserving local employment opportunities.

While the Kroger-Albertsons merger may have initially raised eyebrows, a deeper understanding of the changing grocery landscape reveals its potential benefits for Happy Valley as well as our state. By leveraging their combined strengths, Kroger can enhance our local stores, provide competitive prices, and continue to support our community. Let us embrace this opportunity for positive change and welcome a future where our communities can thrive.

Lizbeth Hale

126. Subject: Input on Merger

Received 4/25/24

While some may view the Kroger Albertsons merger with skepticism, I think it's important to recognize the positive impact it can have on our community and local businesses.

In today's rapidly changing retail landscape, we must embrace businesses that contribute to the fabric of our communities over discount store and online giants like Walmart and Amazon. Fred Meyer and Albertsons, with their longstanding presence in our area, serve as anchor stores in many shopping centers, upon which countless other local, small businesses depend. These stores not only provide essential goods but also drive foot traffic and support the vitality of our local economy.

By merging, Kroger and Albertsons have an opportunity to invest in our local stores, lower prices, find more local vendors and growers, and enhance the overall shopping experience for residents in Gresham and East County. This investment is not only beneficial for consumers but also for small businesses that rely on these anchor stores to attract customers and thrive.

Furthermore, the commitment to preserving jobs and keeping stores open demonstrates a commitment to our community's well-being. In a time of economic uncertainty, maintaining stable employment opportunities is essential for our residents and the resilience of our local economy.

As a member of the Heart of Main Street Business Coalition, I urge our community to support initiatives that promote the growth and sustainability of local businesses. The Kroger-Albertsons merger presents an opportunity to strengthen Gresham and East County's retail landscape and bolster the success of businesses that are the heartbeat of our community.

As a business owner in East County, I embrace the potential of this merger to benefit our area and its residents. By supporting businesses that invest in our community, we can ensure a dynamic and vibrant future for our community

Dean Hurford

127. Subject: Please reject Kroger/Albertsons merger

Received 4/25/24

To whom it may concern,

We would like to communicate our opposition to the proposed merger of the two grocery/pharmacy giants. The Albertsons/Safeway merger was a disaster for grocery competition, leading directly to the loss of Haggens markets in Oregon. Haggens offered many superior products compared to the other stores and consumers had to accept inferior products that remained. Kroger completely destroyed the reputation of Fred Meyer stores by replacing superior FM branded products with inferior Kroger brands. Kroger has also systematically removed competing brands from their shelves, again replacing with inferior Kroger brands or cheap national brands. Our local Fred Meyer store continuously rearranges aisles and shelves, making consumer choice confusing and time consuming. The aisles are often blocked by online shopping staff; the experience is quite unpleasant. Kroger also failed to negotiate with Cigna, a major health insurance company, resulting in the loss of Fred Meyer Pharmacy as an approved provider.

In our town of Newberg, OR, the Fred Meyer and Safeway stores are across the road from each other. It cannot be believed that both stores will survive a merger. Lastly, our small IGA store at the other end of town could be negatively impacted if such a large conglomerate is able to control supply chains through its enormous purchasing power, much like Walmart has been able to do in many communities.

Giant corporations need to have their "Trusts" broken up, not allowed to grow larger. Kroger has proven that merging raises prices, reduces choice and makes shopping a frustrating experience. These mega-corporations cannot be trusted in their attempts to manipulate regulators by offering to sell a few stores to a relatively smaller company. That's an end-around to the promise not to close stores (wink-wink) and the Haggens experience informs us well as to the likely success of those actions for consumers.

Thank you,

Russell & Pamela Johnson

128. Subject: Kroger merger public comment

Received 4/25/24

I'm writing to express my support for the Kroger-Albertsons merger, which brings together two important grocery chains in our community. Having lived in Oregon for many years, I've seen how these stores contribute to our local economy and residents' well-being.

The merger offers several benefits, including job security for employees and more competition in the grocery industry. Kroger and Albertsons have pledged to keep all frontline workers and honor existing agreements, which is crucial for workers relying on these jobs.

Also, the merger could improve services and lower prices for consumers like me. By combining resources, Kroger and Albertsons can invest in technology and innovation, making shopping better for everyone.

I believe the Oregon Health Authority should approve the merger, recognizing its potential to benefit both workers and consumers in our state. This merger is a chance to strengthen our economy, support our communities, and ensure the continued success of these grocery chains.

129. Subject: citizen comment on proposed merger

Received 4/25/24

Any prior merger of grocery stores in Oregon—I am in Eugene—have brought less choice of products and eventually, higher prices. Because I am a customer who likes higher quality foods and meats, I've seen less choice and more evidence of “store brand” factory-farmed meats, which are of lower quality and taste.

Often, produce is from Mexico and is not fresh. According to Consumer Reports latest report on pesticides in the food supply, an increasing amount of conventional food imported from Mexico has higher levels of contaminants. I don't see much, if any, local sourcing from big corporate stores like Albertsons and Fred Meyers.

A big merger will only cement—and I mean cement—purchase channels that will all go toward midwestern and southern factory operations, the worst treatment of animals, the worst choices for feed grains and grasses. Brand choice will shrink again to the Kroger, or whatever, brand. Forget competition. Forget local seasonal sourcing.

I presently shop primarily to Albertson's out of convenience, half a mile away, although I sometimes shop at Fred Meyers, which is only a few miles away, and my housemate shops primarily at Fred Meyers, and COSTCO.

Please do not approve this merger. I know consumers will suffer in quality, choice, and price.

Elizabeth Lyon

Eugene, OR

130. Subject: (no subject)

Received 4/25/24

I live in Newport, OR and have since 1969. The proposed merger of Kroger's and Safeway/Albertson's in our small community would be disastrous. Kroger's claim they wouldn't close down or sell many stores but that's exactly what would happen here. The reason - our Fred Meyer is located on the corner of NE 20th and Hwy 101 and Safeway is across the street at NE 20th and Hwy 101. Safeway is the main grocery store for a lot of the population. It was here when I moved to Newport in 1969. Fred Meyer came to town in the 1980's. They didn't take all the business away in Newport but they definitely hurt a lot of our small businesses, many of which have been gone a long time. Several years ago both Fred Meyer and Walmart remodeled their stores into "super" stores. It's to the point a lot of customers could use motorized carts to do their shopping so they don't go there if they can avoid it. I personally do not patronize either store unless absolutely necessary and I know a lot of people feel the same way. Both my husband and I are retired on a fixed income. We were both union employees while still working and I know a merger would hurt this town and the employees of both stores. Competition would go by the wayside as Kroger would be a monopoly and would do whatever it took to improve their profits. Other big mergers in history have already proven they didn't help the "little guy"! So many businesses moved their manufacturing to China because it was cheaper than employing Americans. They didn't care about quality but profits. We end up getting cheaply made products and a great many being recalled because of problems. I'm hoping this merger is defeated for the good of everyone.

131. Subject: Kroger, Albertsons merger comments

Received 4/26/24

I am firmly against the merger of Kroger and Albertsons.

Looking at history, within 5 mi we had both an Albertsons and a Safeway. Then Albertsons purchased Safeway. Within 6 months Albertsons closed the nearby Safeway and the only grocery shopping we had available was Albertsons. Our options were taken away to gain better grocery prices because competition was removed from our area unless you wanted to travel many miles to a different grocery store.

The pharmacy line at the Albertsons grew so long that I finally went to an online prescription service; postal prescription services, PPS, which is owned by Kroger of all people.

I think it would be a mistake to allow the Kroger Albertsons merger to occur. It will remove competition and increase grocery cost for our local Oregon families. It will also remove pharmacy competition.

I am against the merger because I'd like to have continued competition within the grocery system and pharmacy system. Don't take our choices away from us.

John Sullivan
Pleasant Hill Oregon

132. Subject: Kroger merger- a former Kroger employed pharmacist

Received 4/26/24

Good morning,

I am writing to you as a former Kroger (Fred Meyer) pharmacist who worked for this company for over 20 years. My position as a permanent part time pharmacist was "eliminated" in February 2020. I know of at least 10 pharmacists who were impacted at this same time in the same manner. I was told that I could stay on with the company but there was no guarantee of benefits or hours. I, as well as several of my other coworkers, decided to separate from the company.

I can tell you that as an experienced pharmacist, I am extremely concerned about the proposed Kroger/Albertsons potential merger. I can share with you my experiences working under a mega retailer and how they managed labor costs by eliminating positions and sacrificed customer service and, I believe, safety by pushing pharmacy "metrics".

Let me know if my experience or insight might be of help.

Sincerely,

Barb Foster-Macal, RPh

133. Subject: Pharmacy

Received 4/26/24

In Tillamook, there are only two pharmacies that are very understaffed and overworked (Kroger and Safeway)

The health department wants to buy a building and have their own Pharmacy, but there's many obstacles I hear. Maybe this issue would encourage OHA push that deal through or find another place for them to have one. Our community is already underserved and this makes it worse.

Janine Brown

134. Subject: Proposed Kroger, Albertsons Merger

Received 4/26/24

Please do not allow the merger of Kroger and Albertsons. In Eugene there will be no place to shop for groceries, other than health food stores -- which are great, but don't carry everything. With a monopoly, Kroger will definitely increase prices.

I shop mostly at Kroger because it is close to my house, but get prescriptions filled at Albertsons because Kroger charges almost twice as much for the same prescription.

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

Margaret Boutell

135. Subject: proposed Kroger-Albertsons merger - submitting a question

Received 4/29/24

Addressing access for patient care:

1. To retain and attract employees can C&S please share how their program promotes patient access to their pharmacists and technicians? i.e., to allow reasonable access for patient consults, immunizations, and other prescription dispensing.
2. What tools will C&S be able to provide to their pharmacists and technicians to ensure the success of the store, (hence ensuring access for patients and avoiding patient care disruption)?

Kind regards,

Elizabeth Jackson PharmD, JD

Portland, OR

136. Subject: Safeway/Albertson's/Kroger merger

Received 4/26/24

To Whom it may concern:

I have been shopping at the Safeway/Albertson's store in Dallas, Oregon for 50 years. They have always had the best prices, the best meat and dairy products and service. Since Safeway merged with Albertson's, the store hasn't been the same. They have discontinued a lot of the Lucerne brand and other Safeway brands that I was used to. The Safeway clerks and bag personnel used to be the best, but now I bring home overloaded bags, with cans on top of bread products etc. They still have good deals and good prices and good meat, but I'm afraid that the merger with Kroger will bring about changes that will not be good. I'm afraid that we will have to buy products that are not local to the northwest and pay more for shipping. I do not shop anywhere else for my groceries, as it is the closest store to me 10 miles away. I'm afraid the service, and prices and products will not be the same. As a consumer I would like to know that I have a say in this matter. I for one am getting tired of corporate America taking over and not leaving us consumers any choice. We just end up having to pay more for less. I thought being a Monopoly would be illegal if I remembered my history correctly. This country is turning away from the smaller companies that made it, and we are being ruled by huge greedy corporations that care nothing about people or their employees. It is very obvious that the employees that have been trained by Albertsons since the takeover of Safeway are not the same as it used to be. Please do not let this takeover happen. Prices will also continue to rise with no competition. I used to work for a family-owned local

business that was sold to a world corporation, and many of us lost our jobs and the prices skyrocketed for the local consumers since there wasn't any competition as they bought it out. Please don't let greed win on this one!

Sincerely,

Teresa Johnson

Dallas, Oregon

137. Subject: Please do not allow this merger with Kroger!

Received 4/27/24

Please do not allow Kroger to merge with Albertsons! I am a senior citizen and I can barely afford groceries as it is! The price of EVERYTHING is going up and if this mega-monopoly is created they will have us at their mercy! More than they do already! How are we supposed to live? What are we supposed to do? Please block this obscene proposal or even more of us will be plunged into poverty and despair!

138. Subject: comment on C&S purchase of Albertson's Kruger

Received 4/28/24

consolidation consolidation! NO NO NO

it's no secret that all this buying up by venture capital and bigger and bigger conglomerates are bad for not just consumers but also health care in our country.

It's clear these businesses put profits and stockholders first and foremost. This is exactly what we don't need. We are not seeing reports of how it is killing us when hospitals and other health care get in the game.

Please do not further this damage by allowing this merger which will negatively impact our pharmacies, already under attack by big business.

As an older American, I rely on my pharmacy for convenience and good service. Please do not let us start losing more of them thru consolidation, merger and buy-outs.

Sincerely,

Sandy Polishuk

Portland, Oregon

139. Subject: Kroger-Albetrsos Merger

Received 4/28/24

To Whom It May Concern,

May 8, 2024

I'm writing to express my extreme protest against this merger. Everyone in my community of Florence, OR is against it also. It is only for the benefit of the share holders at the expense of regular residents & store employees. Recently Fred Meyers was acquired by Kroger here in Florence. The spread of choices in the store decreased, prices went up (not just because of inflation) & even store employees were not happy with the changes, mentioning to me personally that they rarely know what's going on & are hearing more complaints. The "corpocracy" in this country is taking over everything to the detriment of our society. I'm 77, a veteran, & have seen a lot over the years; what's now transpiring is nothing more than a continual \$\$\$ grab by those that already have more than they need-----don't let this merger happen !

Thanks for your time,

Jeff Talbot & also Cher Thatcher

Florence, OR

140. Comment transcribed from voicemail message

Received 4/26/24 via voicemail

I don't believe Kroger should be able to acquire Albertsons. I live in a little, tiny town, Klamath Falls, Oregon, and they have a monopoly. It's ridiculous. You should keep them separate.

141. Comment transcribed from voicemail message

Received 4/26/24 via voicemail

Hi, I was reading an article about the merger with Kroger-Albertsons. I tried to send you an email, but it bounced back, and I had the right email address. I wanted to let you know that Kroger handles all the mail-order prescriptions for Providence Health Care in Oregon. It is under a company called Postal Prescriptions. This merger might, could, affect that. I don't know how many members Providence Health Care has in Oregon, probably a lot. So that is another thing to consider looking at this merger from a pharmaceutical perspective.

[Personal information redacted]

I hope this information has been useful to you.

142. Comment transcribed from voicemail message

Received 4/26/24 via voicemail

Hello, my name is Lori [inaudible]. I am calling to leave a comment regarding the potential Kroger merger with Albertsons. First of all, I want to thank our Attorney General for joining the FTC with the eight other states in the lawsuit to block the proposed merger. And I am extremely concerned about what that merger could mean for citizens in Oregon. We've seen what consolidation of

corporations has done in other areas; the price of groceries is already through the roof; many families cannot afford to feed themselves. It's a dire situation. I do not support the merger with Kroger and Albertsons. Thank you.

[Personal information redacted]

143. Comment transcribed from voicemail message

Received 4/26/24 via voicemail

This merger between Kroger and Albertsons is going to be an absolute disaster for people all over in Oregon. It's, I mean, they promise all of this stuff, all this stuff that rates won't go up and whatever, but gradually, they will. And you just cannot trust this merger to help people in Oregon, at all. It's going to be a disaster. Thank you.

144. Comment transcribed from voicemail message

Received 4/26/24 via voicemail

Hi, my name is Barb Foster-Macal. I am a registered pharmacist in the state of Oregon; currently not employed, but I had been a pharmacist for over twenty years with Kroger (Fred Meyer). I don't know if you need input on how we were treated – some of us pharmacists – we were actually let go in 2020. I might be able to share some insight on the pharmacists perspective from working for quite a while at Kroger.

[Personal information redacted]

I'll read up on what you're doing. Alright, thanks. Have a good day. Bye.

145. Comment transcribed from voicemail message

Received 4/30/24 via voicemail

Hello, my name is Renee [inaudible], and I'm a resident in Florence, Oregon. I'd like to leave a message for the Oregon Health Authority review on the Kroger merger that's being proposed. I've read about this extensively, and of course, being in a rural community, many of us are very concerned about a merger that is going to close another pharmacy. We already lost Rite-Aid a few months ago, which was just devastating. In Florence, we only have one Safeway and one Fred Meyer and who knows what this corporate merger is going to do. They always say they're not going to make any changes, and then you have to ask yourself well then why are they merging. I would predict that the Kroger merger is going to be more layoffs, more consolidation, higher prices, and less labor where people are going to lose jobs. I emphatically urge the OHA to deny this merger, please. Thank you.

[Personal information redacted]

146. Comment transcribed from voicemail message

Received 5/1/24

My name is Suzanne Curtis. I live north of Florence. I'm calling about combining our two big grocery stores, Albertsons and Fred Meyer. I know it's a tough situation, but we're an isolated community, and I also know that things will be higher because you have to get it here. So please, while you are considering this, realize that there will be less competition. Is there any way, if you do combine them, how are we guaranteed there will be competition in pricing? And secondly, what about the pharmacy situation? How is that going to be handled if you merge?

Thank you for your time and thank you for taking our comments.

147. Comment transcribed from voicemail message

Received 5/6/24

Hello, my name is Ellen Bridges. I live here in Eugene, Oregon and I am calling about the Kroger-Albertsons-Safeway merger. I think it's a dreadful idea, and the reason why I feel it's a dreadful idea is because we already have food deserts; and the more I shop at Fred Meyer, the less they have. So, we need to not have this merger happen. They don't care about us. They're not caring about whether or not we are eating healthy food or whether or not it's fresh or how their employees are treated or anything else. I used to work for Fred Meyers back in the 80s and they were great for everybody. Now I don't really think they care so much, they're just worried about their bottom dollar and there's enough for everybody's need but there is not enough for everyone's greed. I ask you please do not approve of this merger. It would be a dreadful problem.

[Personal information redacted]

Again, my name is Ellen Bridges. I live in Eugene, Oregon and have for almost 38 years now and shop at Fred Meyer all the time otherwise known as Kroger, but this is a stupid idea. Do not make this merger. Thank you so much for considering all these different opinions and for the work that you're doing to keep us all healthy. I wish you peace and kindness and good day.

148. Subject: Kroger-Albertsons merger

Received 5/6/24

I do not want Albertsons and Kroger to be merged in Oregon. I was assaulted in a local Albertsons store in Happy Valley, Oregon in the past. A young man shoved his grocery cart full of weight into my back and foot. I had injuries from that incident. Albertsons management refused to allow me to see the store video when I asked the manager for help to

Identify the person. I did file a police report with Clackamas County Sheriff's office. I also contacted Albertsons regarding my complaint to a corporate office in California . They did nothing to help me. Albertsons failed to provide a safe space to shop by refusing to protect my civil rights to help me identify the unknown person who assaulted me.

Ethically Albertsons -Safeway is not a company that earns respect from a consumer. They are not a company that Kroger should be a part of.

Sincerely,

Constance Gaunt

149. Subject: Kroger Fred Meyer

Received 5/6/24

I recently read an article about the proposed Fred Meyer Kroger merger in Florence, Oregon. I am contacting you to express my strong opposition to the merger. Florence is a small coastal town with a significant number of people 55 years and older. The options to purchase food, clothing, books, household items and other common items are very limited. Pharmacy and medical services are extremely limited - especially with the recent closure of Rite Aid.

The merger would create one major food store in Florence - reducing competition and employment opportunities. Reduced options (i.e. decrease competition) results in higher cost to consumers.

I do not want to increase my dependence on Amazon. I choose to support small, local business as often as possible. Currently, I drive to Eugene for some medical care, basic clothing (including shoes) purchases and home renovation products. Yesterday I bought a new patio door in Eugene because local hardware stores do not have them available. Citizens in Florence do not need fewer options - we need more options.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my perspective.

Susan Schuster
Florence, OR
97439

150. Subject: Kroger/Albertson Merger

Received 5/7/24

Kroger/Albertson Merger Comment

I live in Tillamook, OR. we have 2 places to get our Prescriptions filled here: Fred Meyer (is not In Network with Medicare/Cigna Prescription Coverage) and Safeway (is In Network with Medicare/Cigna Prescription Coverage). I am nearing 65 soon, I am low income, I have no transportation and our Local Public Transit is having to eliminate many routes that would provide access to out of town connections for Prescriptions. I have no family or friends that can drive out of town (Hillsboro and the Metro are) to pick up Prescriptions. This is a common situation for many others like me here. I attended the Zoom Meeting on April 24, 2024, I heard nothing from any

parties involved that was comforting in any way to the Citizens in this area. Involvement with C&S leaves me with fear especially since they are primarily an East Coast Co. with no current involvement or experiences with the economics here in Oregon. If this Merger happens it would have an Enormous Negative Impact on a large portion of the population here in our coverage area (Astoria to just north of Lincoln City) for Prescription Coverage as well as an already Stressed Impact on our Medical Providers! I DO NOT SUPPORT this Merger in any way, it would be Dehumanizing as well as it is a violation of Monopoly Law, Human Rights Laws, ADA Laws, and Seniors with Disabilities Act.

I DO NOT SUPPORT MERGER between Kroger-Albertsons-C&S

Anita Redheart
Tillamook, OR.

151. Subject: Kroger

Received 5/8/24

I urge the community review board to recommend a NO to the OHA regarding the proposed Kroger-Albertsons merger.

I live in the Santa Clara area of Eugene, and I have two choices for groceries and prescriptions within one mile of home. Albertsons and Fred Meyer. The two stores are directly across the street from each other. Both stores have pharmacies which are understaffed and overworked. (I am a retired pharmacist) . Neither store is equipped to take the others' prescription load.

I have noticed grocery prices are generally higher at Albies so most of my shopping is done at Freddie's, and they are expensive, too. If they merged, do you think the conglomerate would lower the Albie prices or raise the Freddie prices? Fred Meyer is already masterful at raising prices, then putting them "on sale". What a ruse, yet we really don't have any other nearby options.

People are also "store loyal", and the cross-section of people who shop these stores are vastly different.

To sum it up, I urge you to recommend NO to the merger.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Britton

About HCMO

The Health Care Market Oversight program reviews proposed health care business deals to make sure they support statewide goals related to cost, equity, access, and quality. For more info, you can connect with HCMO staff:



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