

February 2, 2016

Representative Mitch Greenlick  
Chair, House Health Care Committee  
900 Court Street NE, H-493  
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Greenlick and Members of the House Health Care Committee:

I write on behalf of Lines for Life to offer our enthusiastic support for HB 4124, which will save lives by preventing opioid misuse, abuse and overdose.

Oregon ranks #2 in the nation for misuse of prescription opioids. We are prescribed more than 100 million opioid pills every year in Oregon -- more than 25 pills for every man, woman and child, every year. Opioid abuse kills more people than car accidents in Oregon – someone dies at least twice a week from opioid overdose; and thousands land in treatment and emergency rooms due to dependence on prescription painkillers. Families throughout Oregon suffer the consequences and are wrenched apart as they work to deal with addiction that often began with a prescription.

We are not alone in Oregon, although we do suffer from higher misuse than nearly every other state. 46 people die from prescription opioid overdoses *every single day* according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) – nearly two lives lost every hour. And the deaths are of course just the tip of the iceberg – for each death, the CDC estimates hundreds of people who misuse and who are dependent on opioids. In addition to the human cost, we all pay a price for the opioid epidemic: the CDC estimates that each death represents a cost to the health care system of over \$4.35 million – and for Oregon, that’s a total system cost of over \$400 million every year.

As you know, Lines for Life is devoted to preventing substance abuse and suicide. In 2014, the Governor and Oregon Health Authority asked us to launch a statewide task force to help draft regional Action Plans to address the opioid epidemic. We have worked with leaders on this issue statewide and nationally, creating the Oregon Coalition for the Responsible Use of Meds (OrCRM). We have convened summits in La Grande and Redmond – the first of seven summits we will host throughout Oregon to develop Regional Action Plans.

With the help of the best minds and thinkers working on prescription drug abuse, OrCRM has identified four key strategies for ending the opioid abuse epidemic:

- Reducing the number of pills in circulation through better prescribing and improved pain management;
- Better disposal of disused pills which sit in our medicine cabinets with potential for abuse;
- Better access to Medication Assisted Treatment for dependence and to Naloxone;
- Education of public and providers to support a better approach to opioids.

HB 4124 would play a key role in meeting two of these goals – better prescribing practices and expanding access to Naloxone.

*Improving Prescriber Access to Life Saving Medical History*

HB 4124 improves access for emergency room providers trying to establish their patient’s medical history. This common sense change in law will ensure that emergency room personnel have easy access to this critical information – and ensure better care and better outcomes while at the same time ensuring patient privacy and medical record integrity.

By improving access to prescribing history, providers can improve their prescribing practices – helping ensure that we are managing pain appropriately while at the same time guarding against inappropriate opioid prescribing.

This measure will improve care and improve outcomes while helping reduce misuse, abuse and overdose from prescription opioids.

*Empowering Pharmacists to Improve Access to Naloxone*

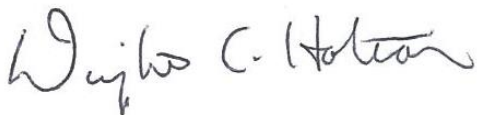
By empowering pharmacists to serve on the front lines of providing access to Naloxone, HB 4124 will help us ensure maximum deployment of this life-saving drug. Naloxone is known as the Lazarus drug – it literally brings back to life people at death’s door due to opioid overdose. Multnomah County has demonstrated the effectiveness of increased Naloxone distribution, and last year – for the first time ever – had less opioid overdose deaths than the rest of the state. Law enforcement agencies throughout Oregon are deploying Naloxone on their patrol vehicles – and saving lives everywhere they go. Data from Massachusetts suggests that broad-based distribution of Naloxone can cut opioid overdose deaths nearly in half (see attached slide).

Empowering pharmacists to improve access to Naloxone will save lives. We look to our pharmacists as trusted advisors in dealing with medication – this effort will not only help appropriate distribution of Naloxone, but will also build appreciation of the risks of opioid overdose.

Lines for Life fully supports HB 4124 and the important improvements it will make in the delivery of care for all Oregonians.

I am happy to provide further information if I can be helpful in any way.

Highest regards,

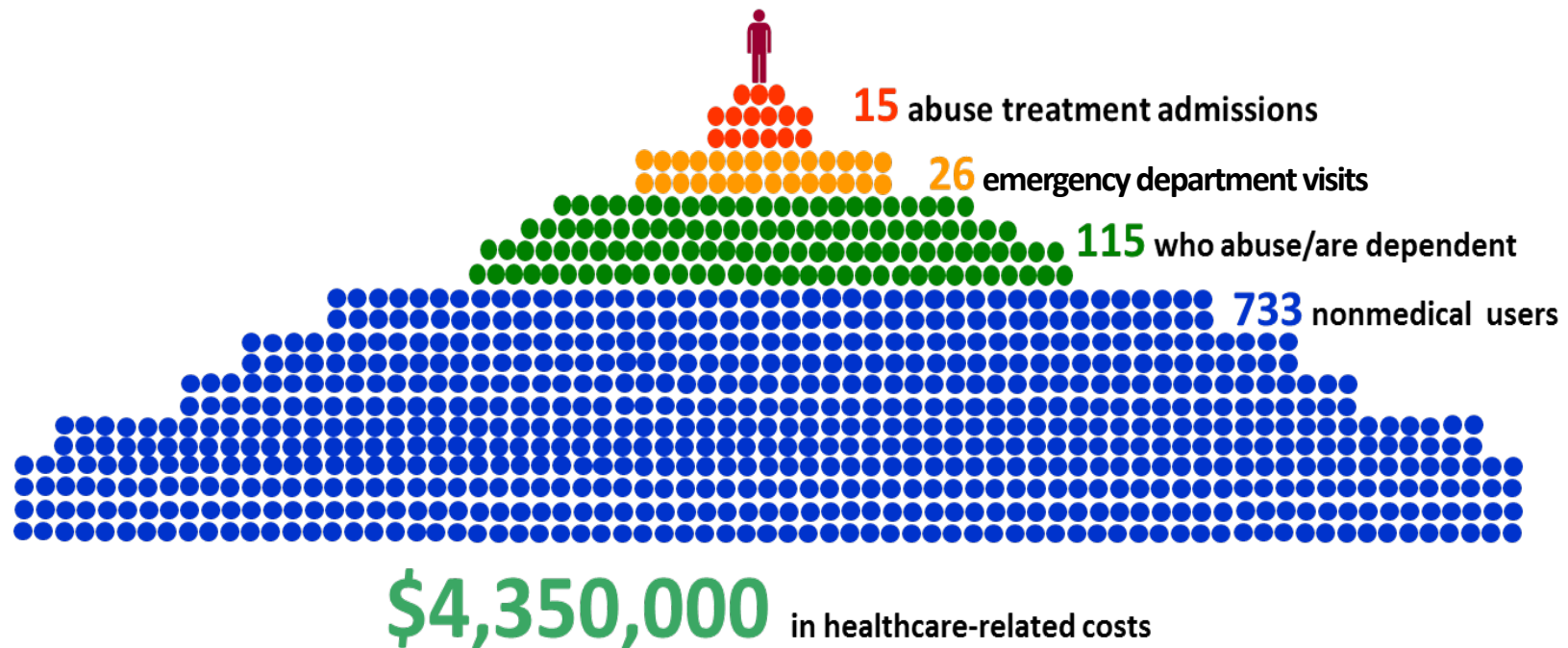


Dwight Holton  
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Rep. Knute Buehler,  
Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward,  
Rep. Jennifer Williamson,  
Rep. Julie Parish

# Overdose deaths are the tip of the iceberg

For every **1** prescription opioid overdose death in 2010 there were...

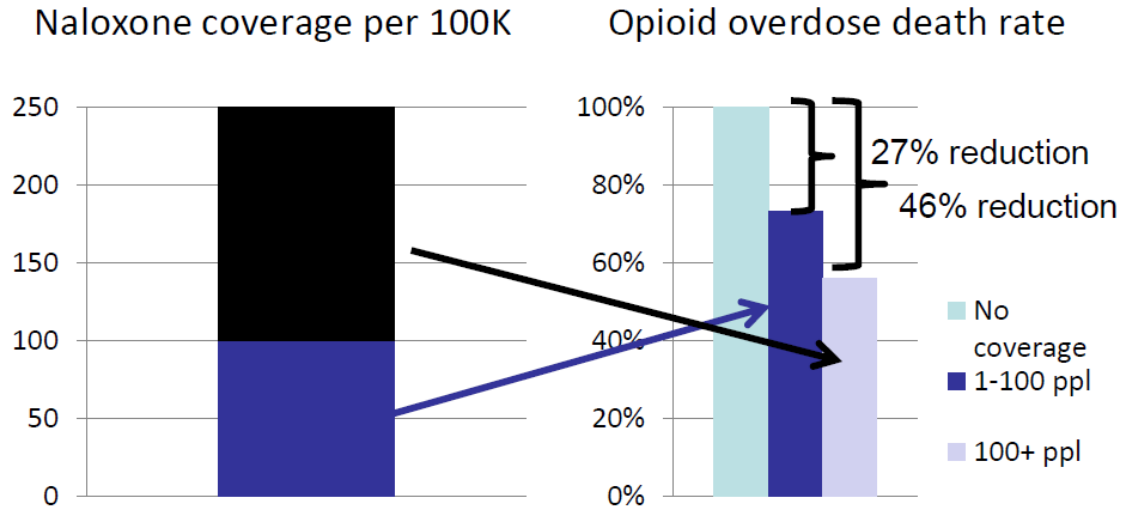


SAMHSA NSDUH, DAWN, TEDS data sets.

Coalition Against Insurance Fraud. Prescription for Peril. <http://www.insurancefraud.org/downloads/drugDiversion.pdf> 2007.



### Fatal opioid overdose rates reduced where



Walley et al. *BMJ* 2013; 346: f174.