



Preventing Substance Abuse & Suicide

JUN 20 2019

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From the desk
of Rep Sheri Schacter
Sheri Schacter

June 21, 2019

Members of the Oregon House of Representatives

Re: **HB 2257: Action to Address the Opioid and Addiction Crisis**



Dear Representatives:

I write to urge adoption of HB 2257, which includes important initiatives to helping us address the opioid and addiction crisis here in Oregon.

We have made important progress in addressing the opioid crisis here in Oregon. We have expanded access to addiction treatment and harm reduction services. We have funded and improved access to safer methods of pain management. We have seen a rising voice of Oregonians in recovery helping shine a light on the way forward for policymakers, families and communities alike. Health systems have taken serious steps to reduce risky prescribing -- resulting in a 30% reduction in our rate of opioid prescribing since 2015.

But we have much work to do. After several years of declining overdose death rates, opioid deaths are on the rise again – driven in part by dangerously potent illicit fentanyl increasingly available in Oregon. We are once again the national leader in misuse of opioids, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. And we still lag far behind meeting the need in providing affordable, accessible, on-demand treatment of drug addiction.

We are not alone – the United States is in the midst of a dual crisis of addiction and mental health crisis, with nearly 80,000 people each year dying by overdose, and another 40,000 or more dying by suicide. (In other words, drug overdose and suicide are killing more than twice as many American *each year* than the total killed in decades of war in Vietnam). This crisis of addiction and mental health demands comprehensive, walk-on-the-moon scale vision and resources to escape the cycle of destruction amongst our families and communities.

HB 2257 provides important steps toward this scale of vision. This legislation will:

- Launch an effort to explore the imperative of providing continuity of addiction care for people incarcerated in Oregon. Over 50% of our prison population needs addiction services – if we *treat* these people and put them on a road to recovery, they will leave prison healthier, more likely to succeed and not return, and less likely to victimize others.
- Lay the groundwork for accreditation of addiction treatment providers. People suffering from addiction – and all too often their mothers, fathers, siblings, children and other loved ones – a traumatized, exhausted and depleted by the work required to find effective, evidence-based treatment for addiction. Accreditation will ensure that we are investing in treatment that works – and give families desperate for relief comfort that their loved ones are on the road to recovery – not the road to nowhere.



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- Invest in support for new families struggling with addiction through the proven and effective Project Nurture, which helps pregnant women reaching for recovery and remain a part of their families.
- Improve the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program. The Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division has been an unsung hero of our efforts to address the opioid crisis – their experts have deployed data from the PDMP to support remarkably effective programming to advance safe prescribing, identify trends and future issues before they arrive, and improve pain management. Supporting PDMP improvement is a top priority and is essential.

The hard news is that we are still on the wrong side of the addiction crisis – things are likely to get worse before they get better. HB 2257 launches important efforts to help us push to address key priorities in the crisis, and I urge its adoption.

I wish to commend Governor Brown, her staff and the bipartisan and extremely thoughtful and engaged legislative members of the Governor's Opioid Task Force. It has been an honor to serve the Task Force in some small way, and I appreciate the legislative and executive leadership. Alas, our work is far from done, but I hope you will adopt HB 2257 to keep us moving forward.

Sincerely,

Dwight Holton
Chief Executive Officer
Lines for Life