

January 31, 2022

Oregon Representative Rachel Prusak
House Committee on Health Care
Oregon State House of Representatives
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Protect Oregon Youth from The Harm of Fatal Opioid Overdose

Dear Chairwoman Prusak and members of the committee:

Northwest Family Services and the Vibrant Future Coalition call on you to support effective policies for protecting young people across Oregon from the harms of opioid overdose and our state's continuing opioid crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the factors that heighten mental health concerns and substance use disorders. Loss of employment, anxiety, loss of loved ones, and the fluctuations in stability throughout the pandemic continue to worsen the environment for those living with a substance use disorder.

Now more than ever, it is critical that we protect Oregonians at risk of an opioid overdose by increasing access to overdose reversal medications, such as naloxone.

The Northwest Family Services team strives to create community-wide change to prevent youth substance use and promote harm reduction practices. One way we do this is by distributing naloxone and educating the community about opioids, signs of an opioid overdose, and the use and function of naloxone. In addition, Northwest Family Services supports family stability and child well-being by focusing on the social determinants of health. We offer programs and services such as outpatient drug treatment and support widespread access to opioid overdose reversal medications like naloxone.

Co-prescribing policies require a health care provider prescribing opioids to their patient to inform a patient of the very real risk of overdose, as well as prescribe an overdose reversal medication in certain situations. Co-prescribing is effective. States that have implemented co-prescribing have seen more patients have greater access to naloxone, with more health care professionals prescribing naloxone to at-risk patients under such policies.

As legislators, you are positioned to create meaningful change in the lives of Oregon's young people. We ask that you protect young people across our state from the harms of accidental opioid overdose by supporting harm reduction practices, such as co-prescribing opioid overdose reversal medication.

We thank you for your continued effort to support the health and well-being of our state's youth.

Sincerely,

Michelle Bollinger on behalf of Northwest Family Services and the Vibrant Future Coalition