

February 4, 2022

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

RE: Why I Support House Bill 4081 to Prevent Fatal Overdoses

Dear Chairwoman Prusak and members of the committee:

I am writing to you today to urge you to support Oregon House Bill 4081 to help increase access to naloxone and education about the risk for opioid overdose. Oregon is #1 in the nation for opioid and methamphetamine misuse. Yet, we are dead last in access to treatment for addiction. According to Oregon Health Authority, accidental opioid overdose deaths for 2021 are on record pace to surpass 2020 accidental overdose deaths

I've been a Registered Pharmacist in Oregon for over 30 years. I have seen the wave of opioid prescriptions with the introduction of Oxycontin. I've witnessed opioid addiction in our patients with chronic pain who relied on large amounts of opiates to give them pain relief. Then, the pendulum swung, and rightly so, prescribers started restricting the quantity of opiates they would prescribe and the patients would have difficulty managing their pain due to tolerance. Some patients even resorted to buying opiates off the street between prescription fills. Our pharmacy took a proactive approach and started offering to dispense naloxone with the opioid prescriptions because Pharmacists are allowed to prescribe Naloxone. OHP covers 100% and private pay insurance has a nominal copay now that generic naloxone is available. Good Rx makes is also very reasonable if you don't have prescription coverage. We educated our patients about accident overdose, tried to alleviate the stigma associated with drug overdose, and showed how easily naloxone can be used to save a life. A written handout can be provided at the intake window for the patient to read while they are waiting for their prescriptions.

Naloxone is already dispensed in Oregon. Therefore, it follows the label and language requirements passed by the legislature that were implemented last year. The written information sheet can be printed in the preferred language. HB4081 is an opportunity to raise awareness and to educate about naloxone as a reversal medication for opioid overdose. The Pharmacist can suggest Naloxone, the patient is not obligated to receive naloxone.

The Oregon legislature currently has the opportunity to combat the rise in fatal overdoses across our state. House Bill 4081 would require that Oregon pharmacists dispensing opioids simultaneously offer a prescription for naloxone and inform patients about their risk of an accidental opioid overdose. **These requirements would help expand access and awareness of opioid overdose reversal medications such as naloxone to prevent fatal overdoses.**

According to a 2020 *American Journal of Public Health* article, "across 5 states (AZ, FL, RI, VT, VA) with mandated naloxone prescription laws, the total number of naloxone doses dispensed in the 90 days after implementation of the co-prescription mandate grew 255%, from 6,208 to 22,067 compared with the 90 days before adoption of the mandate."

Several states have already mandated naloxone co-prescription and have seen naloxone dispensing grow dramatically in the months following.

With House Bill 4081 in Oregon, legislators can ensure patients and communities have access to tools that can help protect individuals from the harms of opioid overdose.

We thank you for your work to support concerned citizens, healthcare professionals, and community leaders in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Kelly Sloop, RPh

West Linn Resident