

Submitter: Christina Lakey
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB1529

This bill now includes “or any other public health concern,” as its definition, which could literally mean ANYTHING. The director could use “anything” he/she deems acceptable as the reason to call for an emergency.

What started as identification verification for purchase of Sudafed, has become an entirely new and highly concerning “health care emergency” bill that would grant Oregon Health Authority (OHA) even more consolidated power to determine emergencies.

The “health care emergency” language is extremely concerning. As written, there would be no need for the Governor to make the determination about an actual public health emergency, granting the unelected Public Health Director the ability to make this declaration on a whim without important oversight.

The Director could, in one fell swoop, determine that “there exists a disease outbreak, epidemic or other condition of public health importance, statewide, or in a specified geographic area of Oregon.”

It could mean that every winter, the OHA Director, currently Patrick Allen, at his sole discretion, could determine that there is a, “Flu emergency: everyone must mask up, or close your business, or shut down in-person learning, or get vaccinated.” This is far too much authority for someone holding an unelected position.

The ambiguous word “determination” is included in the amendment. This word is not defined anywhere and opens the door to abuses of power.

Where is the accountability for the OHA Director, who—again—is an unelected bureaucrat? Nowhere.

What problem is this amendment solving? None.

The people of Oregon deserve greater transparency and discretion from our elected officials and those who hold unelected positions in our state agencies.