

Submitter: Virginia Hall
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB1529

VOTE NO ON HB 1529 NO MATTER WHAT FORM IT'S PRESENTED IN

SB1529 was initially proposed as authorization for pharmacy technicians to swipe an identification card for the purchase of Sudafed.

Now, that language is gone and includes the sneaky dash-two "-2" last minute amendment, creating an entirely new and highly concerning "health care emergency" bill. Now the SB1529 Engrossed language change would grant Oregon Health Authority (OHA) even more power, as an unelected body of government officials, with access to more than a \$29 billion budget for a two-year period.

This bill would create an indirect workaround option to grant additional authority to the director of the Oregon Health Authority.

This "health care emergency" language is disturbing because, as written, would allow an unelected public health official to make the determination and announcement about an emergency on a whim with little justification, transparency or accountability. This person or agency could, in essence, determine "that there exists a disease outbreak, epidemic or other condition of public health importance statewide or in a specified geographic area of this state."

If adopted, what might this bill look like? It could mean that every winter—indefinitely—the Director, at their sole discretion, could declare, "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.

This bill does not answer any of the following questions:

- This bill now includes "or any other public health concern," as its definition, which could literally mean ANYTHING. The director could use "anything" he deems acceptable as the reason to call for an emergency.
- The ambiguous word "determination" is included in the dash-two 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.
- How is a "specified geographic area of this state" even determined—could this mean your apartment or neighborhood is targeted?

Absolute power corrupts absolutely, as history continues to show us. This direct effort to sneak in this amendment is an underhanded “gut and stuff” tactic that needs opposition. Please vote NO on SB1529 Engrossed and withdraw any support.

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

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