

Co-Chairs Lieber and Kropf, and Members of the Joint Interim Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response,

Monday's hearing confirmed that our communities need real solutions, real safety, and real healing when it comes to addressing the overdose and addiction crisis.

I am submitting a public comment to show support for rapidly expanding treatment services in Oregon. As you heard on Monday, the lack of a full continuum of care is a root cause for the problem in our state and people, communities, and families across our state cannot wait any longer.

I thank you for your time and consideration on this meaningful bill.

My name is Breanna Tupper and I am the Program Manager for a non-profit in Lane County called Community Outreach through Radical Empowerment. My agency endorses supports expanding treatment services and continuing down the path of decriminalization.

I will not wax poetic about the crisis our state is going through in regards to overdose, as you all live here too and see the reality. Instead, I will respect your time and get to the point-lack of low barrier access to harm reduction supplies like narcan and fentanyl test strips is truly a barrier to saving lives. The criminalization of supplies such as fentanyl test strips and other harm reduction related items for agencies or individuals that are not designated SSPs creates another barrier. Expansion to treatments pit safety into the hands of the public without fear of prosecution.

Our agency hands out thousands of doses of naloxone and fentanyl test strips to people within our community each year, as well as provides training on how to use these items. These life-saving items not only go into the hands of those who use drugs on a consistent basis, they also go to those in the community who want to keep their friends and family safe, or those who are wanting to try drugs for the first time or casually use drugs but also want to ensure that they don't die of an overdose. Everyone deserves access to these items, not just the people who are brave enough to seek services from a provider.

This bill will not only expand access, it will remove stigma and fear. Some may fear accessing fentanyl test strips or other harm reduction items for themselves or their loved ones due to concerns about legality or how accessing SSPs can be (unfortunately) perceived. The college kid might not want to go to the needle exchange to get test strips for their molly-and stigma, if we view it in these terms, can lead to more needless deaths and health problems. Allowing low barrier access to items normalizes their use.

Additionally expanding treatment:

Protects vulnerable youth under the age of 15 who are seeking treatment for substance from potential abuse. Not every kid has a safe family and may be unable to seek treatment due to the requirement that their access must be reported to guardians. The removal of this requirement when harm could be indicated is imperative for young people's access to treatment.

Provide safety in our schools by allowing faculty to administer naloxone to students experiencing an overdose, which many are hesitant to do currently due to liability concerns.

Allow OHA to administer a standing order to publicly accessible buildings, which will assure building

owners and others who might want to possess or administer naloxone but don't due to fear of repercussions that they are free from liability.

Allow first responders to leave more naloxone with a person when responding to an overdose to ensure they have access should they overdose again, either within that same incident or in the future.

Allow a network of reporting to be formed so that we as a state can collect valuable data on overdoses and continue to formulate a response.

Each one of these actions is incredibly important in responding to the overdose crisis. There are two things I know for certain on the topic of drug use-the first being that people use drugs and will continue to do so, and the second being that using drugs should never be a death sentence. I think that it is revolutionary that our state has agreed to have this conversation surrounding harm reduction instead of only preaching that people must remain abstinent, which is not realistic and has been proven to be ineffective in other parts of the country and throughout history. I think this bill will let Oregon continue to be a leader within the United States on the radical, humane and compassionate treatment of those who use drugs.

Thank you,

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Sincerely,
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