

Representative Nosse, Chair
House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

January 30, 2023

Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sharon Meieran. I am a Multnomah County Commissioner, a practicing emergency physician, and a volunteer with Portland Street Medicine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill 2395 and the -2 amendment.

I speak today from the perspective of a front line provider seeing the devastating consequences of opioid addiction on patients coming into the ER. I also speak from the perspective of an outreach provider going to encampments and caring for a population that is living in squalor and dying from opioid overdose in escalating numbers. But the most important perspective I offer today is as a Multnomah County Commissioner - your local government partner who implements your policies.

Counties have never had the resources we need to weave together holistic systems to prevent and treat addiction. To create systems that address the intersection of substance use disorder, homelessness and the criminal justice system. Each year in Multnomah County we've had to devote larger and larger shares of our public resources to deal with the impacts of opioid addiction across the board. But as you've heard, we have never seen anything like what we've seen over the past couple of years.

As you've heard, people are dying in escalating numbers because fentanyl is killing them. And too often we can't prevent the harm and death because our hands, and the hands of front line providers, are tied and there is too much difficulty accessing life-saving treatments.

The good news is that you have the power to untie our hands. You have the power to save lives simply by removing needless barriers and enacting some common sense strategies that allow for providers to administer known treatments, individuals to access treatments, and policymakers to standardize and measure the impact and need for treatment.

The power is in HB 2395 and the opioid harm reduction package. It will not magically solve the opioid crisis. But it will make a difference almost immediately. Harm reduction is an essential component of any holistic opioid prevention and treatment strategy.



Sharon Meieran
Multnomah County Commissioner, District 1

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This package can be the state's defibrillator to save lives now, reduce suffering, reduce hospitalization, and give Oregonians from all corners of the state a chance at recovery.

Thank you for considering my testimony. And thank you to Representative Dexter for your leadership in introducing the opioid harm reduction package.

Sincerely,
Dr. Sharon Meieran
Multnomah County Commissioner