

February 14, 2023

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

RE: HB 2574 - Relating to Guaranteed Access to PEP

Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee,

I'm Sharon Meieran, a Multnomah County Commissioner but testifying here today as an ER doctor who trained at UCSF, the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic. I strongly support HB 2574.

I recall when HIV was a death sentence. I was a med student in the 90's so I missed the darkest days of the epidemic, but those days of my medical education are burned into the institutional memory of San Francisco General Hospital. I cared for patients with AIDS who died. I knew the fear that by making one mistake I could get a needlestick and my life could be changed.

The development of PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) was like a miracle. The idea that you could be exposed to HIV and either not get it or at least not die was mind-blowing. But the fear now is around not getting PEP.

In the ER one night on a shift, I was exhausted after doing a procedure. I put a needle into a sharps container that was too full and the needle bounced back and stuck me. It was a fat needle, it had blood on it, and it pierced through my glove. I can't describe the dread I felt. But I knew I needed PEP. And had no idea how to get it. Hospital offices were closed, and I spent the next hour trying to figure out what to do.

And I'm a doctor at low risk working in a big urban hospital. I can't imagine the experience of people at higher risk, or are in a rural setting, or don't happen to be healthcare providers who know the systems and who to call. I do know they might give up, suffer needlessly, not get a full supply of PEP, or even contract HIV.



**Sharon Meieran**  
Multnomah County Commissioner, District 1

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600, Portland, Oregon 97214  
Phone: (503) 988-5220 | Email: [district1@multco.us](mailto:district1@multco.us)

This bill is common sense and would create a streamlined and consistent process for accessing PEP. In the ERs for certain, because so much happens at times when people have nowhere else to go. But access needs to be ubiquitous - including primary care clinics and urgent care. And this should go without saying but I'll say it anyway - insurance should cover the full 28-day course of PEP.

Thank you for considering my testimony, I'd be happy to answer any questions. And thank you to Cascade AIDS Project for bringing this bill forward.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sharon Meieran