

Submitter: Joseph Gramer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure: SB607

Testimony to OR Senate Health Committee regarding SB607

From: Joseph Gramer, Salem

Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care, I firmly support Senate Bill 607, which asks you, our representative legislators to investigate current membership of the Oregon Pain Management Commission.

I'm the most basic of all stakeholders in that for 10 years plus I've lived with disabling, intractable chronic pain. I'm a patient. I've also advocated for patients' rights, and am a member of the Oregon Pain Action Group.

It's been clear to many patients, providers, and advocates that, over the past few years, a troubling trend of radical anti-opioid ideology has infected various panels and officials in and around Oregon's government – including the Oregon Pain Management Commission. Opiophobic attitudes and stigmatization of patients has pushed ahead here, regardless of growing awareness in the national media and elsewhere that legitimate patients (and the brave doctors still willing to treat us) are not responsible for what is actually a heroin and illegal fentanyl crisis. Hopefully the revised CDC guidelines on opiate prescribing will help alleviate medical abandonment, skyrocketing suicide rates, and other grievous harms done to some of our most vulnerable and marginalized citizens. Hopefully so will you, our elected legislators.

Hopefully, Senate Bill 607, which aims at restoring genuine care, accountability, and bias-free thinking to this key commission, will be a good beginning in transforming Oregon into a safe, rather than a notorious state in which to live for people like me: intractable pain patients for whom opiate-based medicine remain a critical tool for functionality and quality of life. (Opiates, despite risks, have been amply proven effective for both acute and chronic pain for centuries, after all, if not millennia.)

As a patient advocate, I've witnessed and encountered a good deal of condescension and sometimes outright hostility from some OPMC members, along with certain other committees associated with the Oregon Health Authority. It's been disheartening to say the least.

I attended your Feb. 20 hearing and was staggered (in a good way!) by the contrast. I

was hugely relieved and encouraged to see and hear government representatives actually listening to us, acknowledging our plight, distinguishing between us and drug addicts (who deserve their own help as well, but are not us), and generally demonstrating humanity. (Why, one of those calling for passage was actually a doctor member of the OPMC itself!) I didn't get to read to you the testimony I'd prepared due to your time constraints. But I left as a happy and hopeful man.

With that, senators, I urge you to champion and pass SB 607. Please hear the Oregon pain community's demand for overdue justice – in this and other matters. Thank you.