

Submitter: Jackilyn Williams  
On Behalf Of: Myself only  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure: SB60

My name is Jackilyn Williams, RN, MSN, NRP and I oppose Senate Bill 60. I have been a licensed paramedic for 34 years, the last 15 years in Oregon. I am a full time (FT) educator for Portland Community College EMS as the Paramedic Program Director (PD) & Instructor. I have been a FT PD for 35 years. Disclosure, I am also a Site Visitor Captain for the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the EMS Professions (CoAEMSP), working in cooperation with the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), the paramedic accrediting body. I am not representing either organization with this testimony. However, the position does give me insight into other paramedic programs nationwide.

The issue being debated here is should Oregon remove the degree requirement and return Oregon EMS to a time when it was not a leader in EMS education. No! Can paramedics trained in a CAAHEP accredited program where the graduates do NOT exit with a degree meet the same high standards as those trained in a CAAHEP program where the graduates exit with a degree? The short answer is yes. They are all meeting the CAAHEP standards for entry-level providers. However, Oregon paramedics have moved beyond just entry-level and hold providers to a higher standard, where the complexity of prehospital patients has required competency in communication skills (verbal & written) & other "soft skills" met by the additional courses for the degree. As one of the two states that require a degree for entry-level paramedics, Oregon EMS is discussed nationally quite frequently, and is being referred to as the standard other states are aiming for. A lot of the discussions are anecdotal & spark debate regarding degrees, but Oregon's degree requirement is also referenced in position papers and peer reviewed journal articles as the direction EMS as a profession needs to move toward.

Prehospital response is more complex than ever before, and the education requirement to stay ahead and stay on "the cutting edge" so to speak, requires that Oregon continue to push forward, not slide backwards. Oregon EMS is the whole state, not just "pockets" of EMS that may have particular difficulties of one type or another. No one denies that rural EMS in Oregon is suffering from staffing challenges, but the answer to those challenges should not be at the expense of excellent, high quality EMS education and licensing requirements! The removal of the degree requirement for licensure is not what the majority of EMS stakeholders or EMS consumers want. It is not what EMS educational institutions want. It is not what the majority of licensed Oregon paramedics want, as it devalues their own accomplishments. EMS education for the future is already discussing the possibility

of Bachelor's level training for entry level paramedics, just as nursing is. EMS needs to always be pushing forward to produce the best clinicians, as prehospital is also attempting to push to be utilized in areas that have been traditionally held only by nurses. There will be a dead stop in this direction without a degree requirement. Oregon EMS should always reach toward higher goals, not grow stagnant, and definitely not move backwards!

Thank you for your time.....