

March 20, 2023

To: Oregon State Legislature

From: Rusty R. Riis- Oregon Paramedic

RE: Measure 60- Letter of Opposition

As an EMS Educator in Oregon, a former paramedic supervisor, and as a community member I strongly oppose this bill.

In 2011 I obtained my Oregon paramedic under the law requiring a degree. As a paramedic, but above all, a patient advocate, our patients deserve the highest level of care and the most prepared paramedics. Through higher education, in preparation for the significant responsibility of a paramedic, I am a better paramedic that is more prepared to handle skills that only physicians (eleven years of education and residency required) and nurses (two to four years) perform.

Oregon emergency medical services have consistently maintained one of the most advanced and aggressive approaches to paramedic care. Few states allow their paramedics to perform the skills and care we do with limited to nearly no ability to communicate with a physician. Reducing the education requirements means reducing the overall preparation a paramedic will have in all aspects of care; the loser will always be our patients and community when we lower our standards.

In a world that expects the best of our public service providers and in a field outside of the United States that requires a bachelor's degree as a paramedic, why would we take this step backward? This won't solve our hiring crisis; this won't solve the reduced pay that paramedics receive. Reducing our standards will empower large corporations to compensate paramedics less. Every other state has as much of a hiring and training crisis, even those without degrees. Reducing our standards does not improve the struggles; it only negatively impacts our patients. As a state that requires a degree for paramedics, we have improved the quality of care for patients and the compensation for paramedics; we truly have changed the paradigm of paramedic care.

As a paramedic, our care must be meaningful, and the current process works and allows Oregon paramedics to be the best prepared for our neighbor's and families' care.

Thank you,

Rusty Riis