

Opposition to SB60

Submitter: Tana Sawzak

Committee: Senate Committee On health care

My name is Tana Sawzak and I oppose Senate Bill 60. I have been an EMS provider and educator for 22 years. I currently work for Clackamas Community College as the EMT Program Director and lead instructor. I am not representing Clackamas Community College, but this position allows me to be familiar with the training requirements of EMS personnel statewide.

EMS has evolved over the last 50 years. Paramedics are not just ambulance drivers with a first aid card. They are well trained, competent, companionate caregivers and patient advocates. In Oregon, we have Emergency Medical Responders who provide on scene care and EMTs, Advanced EMTs and EMT Intermediates who provide care on scene and transport. All of whom are not required to have a degree. These providers do not require a degree because they are **technicians**. The Paramedic is a **clinician**. The Paramedic has more knowledge and critical thinking skills above and beyond an EMT. They need to be able to provide quality care, and anticipate a patient's changing conditions much the same way a nurse or doctor would. There is a nursing shortage as well, however no one is suggesting that we lower our expectations and drop the degree requirement for nurses.

The classes this bill aims to eliminate are math, which Paramedics need to interpret vitals and prepare and administer correct drug dosages. They need a basic writing course to ensure accurate and complete reporting to allow for a continuity of care between out of hospital and hospital providers. Accurate reports help establish evidence-based guidelines, help agencies increase funding for new equipment and staffing, reduce medical errors, liabilities. Paramedics are required to take anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology so they know what each of the body systems do, how they function and what happens when disease and injury impact their ability to function properly. They take health and wellness to learn how to stay physically and mentally healthy to serve their community, and they take crisis communication to know how to approach and calm anxious, scared patients and family members. I can't imagine taking any one of those important skills away from their education.

The degree brings legitimacy and a seat at the healthcare table. It allows EMS providers to have a career and make a living wage to support their families and their communities. There is a shortage of Paramedics, but the way to solve it is not to lower educational requirements. States that do not have a degree requirement still have Paramedic shortages. It's a nationwide issue, not just an Oregon issue. We need to find other ways to build a strong sustainable workforce to care for all of Oregon without sacrificing education and impacting patients' lives.

Thank You,

Tana Sawzak