

March 22, 2023

Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Dear Committee Members:

RE: HB2397- Opioid Harm Reduction Package Amendment

HIV Alliance asks you to pass HB2397, Opioid Harm Reduction Package amendment. Your support is critical to the health of many Oregonians.

HIV Alliance is a nonprofit committed to supporting people living with HIV/AIDS and preventing new HIV infections throughout Oregon. As an agency, we provide wrap-around interventions that address the social determinants of health to protect people living with and at risk for HIV in our community. Our programming includes extensive harm reduction services that aim to reduce the negative consequences associated with drug use. We provide these services to manage the root causes of HIV infections, improve health, and our belief in the right of people who use drugs to be cared for.

Our work makes us very familiar with the consequences of the opioid crisis. Fentanyl is an extremely potent synthetic opioid emerging everywhere in illicit forms, playing a significant role in the harm the epidemic has caused Oregonians. This crisis has led to many people having fentanyl without their knowledge or in higher-than-expected quantities. Counteracting the escalating dangerous consumption of illicit opioids with tools such as Naloxone is critical to Oregonian's safety. Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids, including fentanyl and prescription opioid medications. Naloxone quickly reverses an overdose by blocking the effects of opioids.

The passage of HB2395 was essential to ensuring our community members had more access to Naloxone through the establishment of a treasury fund for OHA's clearing house program in 2019, many lives have been saved already. HIV Alliance is the largest syringe exchange provider outside of Portland and the Clearinghouse is essential to our operations. HIV Alliance urges you to continue to combat this opioid crisis with the passage of this amendment to the Opioid Harm Reduction Package because it formalizes the Clearinghouse within the OHA and provides an organizational structure that ensures efficiency in acquiring harm reduction tools. HB2397 will help the Alliance seek resources to promote the health and wellbeing of those at risk for HIV/HCV and overdose.

HIV Alliance appreciates your consideration of HB2397. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Renee Yandel
Executive Director

