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April 11, 2023

RE: SUPPORTING HB 2395 OPIOID HARM REDUCTION POLICY PACKAGE

Dear Senators:

On behalf of Blanchet House, I write to express our full support of HB 2395, the Opioid Harm Reduction Policy Package, and I urge you to vote in support. Oregon's opioid epidemic requires all-hands-on-deck approach. Currently, access to life saving tools such as naloxone and fentanyl testing strips is cumbersome and expensive—that is, where access exists at all.

Blanchet House provides free meals, clothing, and other resources to persons experiencing houselessness. We also operate two transitional housing programs, one in Old Town, Portland, and our Blanchet Farm program in Carlton, Oregon. We know first hand how essential it is for people to have a chance to recover from opioid addiction and pursue a more meaningful, purposeful life. Many of our program residents led lives nearly destroyed by opioid addiction. I say *nearly* because at Blanchet House, these residents have found support for their recovery and a new lease on life. Opioid addiction need not be a death sentence, nor should we condemn opioid addicts as beyond salvation. Every life we save at Blanchet House—and we have saved many lives using Narcan in the past two years—is a life we can change.

HB 2395 is essential legislation because we can't change lives if we can't save lives, and this bill provides greater access to life saving tools. In addition, there are important education and prevention measures in the bill that are badly needed in Oregon given the extent of the challenge facing our community. It's imperative to remember that opioid addiction and opioid overdose isn't merely an issue for homeless persons. Fentanyl overdoses and exposure, where accidental or not, threatens all Oregonians, including students and first responders.

We urge you to support HB 2395 to help save lives and combat the opioid epidemic threatening our entire state.

Sincerely,

Scott Kerman

Scott Kerman
Executive Director