



**Oregon Chapter
American College of
Emergency Physicians**

**Statement for the Record
Committee
April 12, 2023
HB 2395 Opioid Harm Reduction**

Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and members of the committee, please accept this statement for the record on behalf of Dr. Alex Skog, the President of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians. OR-ACEP is a medical society that has represented physicians specializing in emergency medicine since 1971 and its members share a commitment to improve emergency healthcare for all Oregonians.

OR-ACEP supports HB 2395A and would like to thank Rep. Dexter's for convening the Opioid Harm Reduction Coalition to develop strategies to address the epidemic.

This bill builds the key components to attack the opioid epidemic head-on with the critical element of establishing funding to put opioid antagonist kits directly in the hands of those who need them.

From the vantage point of treating Oregonians every day in the emergency department, the past few years have demonstrated a complete transformation of the opioid epidemic. No longer are people overdosing on opioids prescribed by medical providers but they are all too frequently unknowingly taking pills that they think are prescription medications and being poisoned by laboratory derived synthetic opioids such as fentanyl and an ever-growing list of even more powerful opioid derivatives. From the straight-A teenager I took care of who thought the Xanax he took at a party would be the same pill as his family member was prescribed to the father taking what he thought was oxycodone from a friend for a back injury, I see Oregonians regularly poisoned by supercharged synthetic opioids thought to be prescription medication.

The Opioid Harm Reduction package pivots our efforts to attack today's epidemic head-on by addressing this new reality. Short acting opioid antagonists, like naloxone, have been shown to be incredibly safe and effective in reversing opioid poisoning. As an emergency medicine physician there are several particular ways

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that this new package of legislation will save Oregonian's lives as soon as it is implemented. First, it will get naloxone into the community where the poisonings are happening. Naloxone must be omnipresent to be able to be administered to victims in the minutes between the first signs of an opioid poisoning developing and the rapid progression of the poisoning to death. The bill also legalizes and removes stigma behind fentanyl test strips. For those who do use any illicit substance, fentanyl test strips save lives. Any barriers to distribution of fentanyl test strips directly endangers the lives of thousands of Oregonians daily and further propagates the current crisis.

This package also complements HB 2397, which establishes the Harm Reduction Clearinghouse Project within OHA and assists with the bulk purchase of naloxone kits, and SB 1043, which requires hospitals, detoxification facilities, and residential treatment facilities to provide two doses of opioid overdose reversal medication to patients who are treated for opioid use disorder and who are discharged to an unlicensed setting. Funding is vital in order to place naloxone in the hands of Oregonians at risk. A single naloxone kit costs \$127 at the pharmacy down the street from my emergency department. Naloxone prescriptions are worthless for my uninsured patients at this price. I need to be able to put the kits directly in the hands of people at-risk.

The Oregon chapter of ACEP has also been active partners in supporting and implementing the Emergency Department Information Exchange, supporting legislation to improve the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program and naloxone prescriptions, serving on opioid task forces at the state and national level and prioritizing appropriate patient care. We appreciate the commitment of Rep. Dexter, legislators and other partners to address the opioid epidemic. OR-ACEP is pleased to be a resource and to advocate for improved and appropriate care for patients.

We urge the legislature to move forward judiciously yet expeditiously in passing this package of life saving legislation.

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