

# OREGON TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of Arthur Towers

OTLA Political Director

**In Regard to Senate Bill 450**

Before the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

April 19, 2023

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Goodwin and Nelson. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The Oregon Trial Lawyers Association is neutral on the base bill, but we are very concerned about a related issue regarding the use of medication to reverse the effect of opioid overdoses. We want to make sure that Oregonians in custody have access to this medication if they are suffering from an opioid overdose.

Tragically, we have seen too many instances in which Oregonians in custody are denied access to the medical care they are required by law to receive. Specifically, we have seen people in custody who are experiencing an overdose treated with extreme callousness.

OPB did an overview of the challenges with health care for those in custody (link below) and found there to be several hundred deaths in jails in Oregon and Washington over a ten-year period. Obviously, not every death has to do with sub-standard health care, but as you can see from the court documents linked below, the problem is severe.

Our members have had to fight either for the individual in custody or their survivors to hold those accountable who deny care. Legislation is moving through the capitol that would provide blanket immunity from liability to government agencies and their contractors that would deny access to opioid reversal medication.

**We would urge the committee to amend this bill to preserve the accountability of jailers and their contractors to keep people safe in their custody.**

Below please find news reports from OPB, the *Oregonian*, and the *New York Times* that outline the crisis in Oregon. I have also linked court documents that go into the specifics of individual cases.

News articles:

[Deputies joke about OD victim who died 4-19-23.pdf](#)

[https://www.opb.org/news/article/jail-deaths-oregon-washington-data-tracking/dying alone Wash Co 4-19-23.pdf](https://www.opb.org/news/article/jail-deaths-oregon-washington-data-tracking/dying-alone-Wash-Co-4-19-23.pdf)

Court documents:

[Family of Kelly Conrad Green v Corizon et al -- summary judgment ruling 4-19-23.pdf](#)

[Family of Donnie Ray Brown -- Findings Recommendation 4-19-23.pdf](#)

[Family of Christina Ryan -- Second Amended Complaint \(filed\) 4-19-23.pdf](#)