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May 1, 2023

Sen. Lew Frederick
Rep. Susan McLain
Oregon Joint Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Education
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for the Oregon Poison Center's Budget Request

I am writing to request that the State provide additional funding in order for the Oregon Poison Center (OPC) to continue its vital service to all the people of Oregon.

As a Registered Nurse, I have specialized in occupational health and safety in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest for the past 40 years. I came to specialize in workplace health after working as Poison Information Specialist/Public Health Nurse in the Rocky Mountain Poison Center in Denver during the 1970s. One of my assignments while in Denver was to help orient Pharmacist Lee Wanke, sent by Oregon to learn the organization and administration of a statewide poison center. Then I trained the three Oregon LPNs who became the first staff of the newly minted Oregon Poison Center.

I know first-hand – the Poison Center saves lives. But it serves more than the parents, grandparents and caregivers of small children who manage to get into an amazing range of household substances that can sicken or prove fatal. They teach parents to “poison proof” their homes to prevent ingestion. The Poison Center advises employees and first responders on potential exposures and essential protective measures to avoid injury during workplace or environmental mishaps. The staff can reassure citizens during fires, chemical releases or other disasters. Poison Center staff can research and apprise emergency department staff on the effects, routes of exposure and treatments of a wide range of drugs and chemicals in order to effectively treat patients.

There is no real substitute for the range of services provided by the OPC. As the population of Oregon grows and the range of chemicals and contaminants expands, the work of the Poison Center becomes even more important. These are services for the people of Oregon. As federal funding decreases it is necessary for the State to step up. I urge you to support an ongoing appropriation to enable the OPC to continue its level of service to Oregonians.

With best regards,

Kate Wood

Kate Wood, MN, RN, ARM
Risk Manager (retired)