



Press Release
Rep. Maxine Dexter, MD
State Representative, District 33

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Statement from Representative Maxine Dexter on National Fentanyl Awareness Day

SALEM, Ore. — Today, on National Fentanyl Awareness Day, [Representative Maxine Dexter](#) (D-Portland), a practicing pulmonary and critical care physician, is urging Oregonians to take notice of the enormous harm illicitly-manufactured fentanyl is having on the health and safety of our community and to consider taking action to help protect Oregonians. Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid, 50 times more potent than heroin, that is responsible for a dramatic and tragic rise in accidental opioid overdose deaths across the nation.

According to the [Oregon Health Authority](#) (OHA), fentanyl-related deaths have surged in recent years, with a 74% increase in Oregon from 2019 to 2020 alone. Fentanyl has become the leading cause of opioid-related deaths in Oregon, surpassing prescription opioids and heroin.

"As a critical care physician, I have seen firsthand the devastating effects of fentanyl overdose on individuals and families," Representative Dexter said. "It is crucial that we take steps to raise awareness of the dangers of illicitly-manufactured fentanyl and ensure that those struggling with substance use disorder have access to life-saving treatment and resources."

To combat this epidemic, Dexter has introduced [House Bill 2395](#), the Opioid Harm Reduction Package. The bill seeks to reduce barriers to Oregonians having meaningful access to harm reduction tools to help keep Oregonians safe and alive. The bill's focus is on increasing access to the life-saving overdose reversal medication, naloxone, as well as tools, including fentanyl test strips, that can be used to detect fentanyl contamination in other drugs as well as increasingly common counterfeit medications.

"I urge all Oregonians to take National Fentanyl Awareness Day as an opportunity to learn more about the dangers of fentanyl and to take steps to protect themselves and their loved ones," Dexter said. "Each of us can take simple steps to make our community safer – like carrying naloxone, which can save a life or talking to our kids about the dangers of taking any kind of pill or drug. Each of us can help make our communities safer by taking action today."

For more information about National Fentanyl Awareness Day and resources available for those struggling with substance use, please visit the [National Fentanyl Awareness Day](#) and [Oregon Health Authority's Fentanyl Facts](#) websites.

House Bill 2395 has received support from the Oregon Department of Justice, Oregon Nurses Association, Kaiser Permanente, Oregon Council for Behavioral Health, Oregon Medical Association, Oregon Society of Addiction Medicine, Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, Oregon Society of Addiction Medicine, Oregon Chiropractic Association, Outside In, Oregon State Firefighters Council, Oregon Fire Chiefs Association, Portland Public Schools, Beaverton School District, Oregon Student Association, Associated Students of University of Oregon, Multnomah County, Association of Oregon Counties, Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, Lane County, Association of Oregon Counties and more.

The bill has earned broad bipartisan support and is co-sponsored by Representatives Bynum, Grayber, Hieb, Reynolds, Andersen, Bowman, Chaichi, Evans, Fahey, Gamba, Hartman, Holvey, Hudson, Javadi, Kropf, Marsh, Nelson, Neron, Nosse, Pham H, Pham K, Ruiz, Tran, Walters, and Senators Steiner, Patterson, Frederick, Gelsler Blouin, Sollman, and Taylor. The bill passed out of the House with a 48-9 vote and out of the Senate Committee on Health Care on May 8. It now heads to the Senate floor.

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