



PRESS RELEASE HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2023

Press Contact:

Hannah Kurowski, hannah.kurowski@oregonlegislature.gov

Life-Saving Opioid Harm Reduction Package Passes the Legislature with Broad Bipartisan Support

SALEM, Ore. — Today, [House Bill 2395](#), the **Opioid Harm Reduction Package**, passed out of the House and Senate with broad bipartisan support. It now moves to the Governor's desk.

Introduced and championed by [Representative Maxine Dexter, M.D.](#) (D-Portland), the bill will help make the life-saving antidote to opioid poisoning, naloxone, broadly available in the community and will increase public access to other harm reduction tools. The package was developed in response to the deadly illicitly-manufactured fentanyl crisis that is devastating communities across Oregon and will start saving lives once made law. In 2022, 1,161 Oregonians died from opioid overdoses, and an average of at least three Oregonians a day die from this tragic and rapidly-growing epidemic.

The package makes life-saving emergency treatments, like [naloxone](#), more available in public buildings, including restaurants, grocery stores, police departments, and schools and will allow its distribution by first responders and emergency care providers. When administered, naloxone can restore breathing and reverse an overdose by rapidly blocking the effects of opioids. The bill further improves youth overdose reporting, legalizes fentanyl test strips and modernizes Oregon's public health statutes to meet the fentanyl crisis Oregon is facing.

"Today Oregon took a critical step towards saving the lives of Oregonians across our state who may be unintentionally poisoned by opioids," **said Representative Dexter**, a board-certified physician. "As elected leaders, our first priority is to protect the health and safety of Oregonians. Today we took definitive action that will decrease the senseless and unnecessary deaths that are tragically taking the lives of people in all of our communities. This bill puts tools in the hands of Oregonians everywhere to save lives and breaks down barriers to treatment."

[According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), people struggling with addiction who have access to harm-reduction tools are five times more likely to go into recovery.

“Substance use disorder is a chronic disease, not only as the medical community understands it, but under Oregon law. Substance use disorder is not a choice, it’s a disease that requires ongoing disease management,” **said [Senator Elizabeth Steiner, M.D.](#)** (D - Portland), a board-certified physician. “Making sure we keep people with substance use disorder alive so that they have the chance they deserve to receive the treatment they need is critical. The best way to do this is to have naloxone and other short-acting opioid antagonists widely available throughout our communities.”

House Bill 2395 also allows the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to issue standing prescriptions for short-acting opioid antagonists for individual and public entities, decriminalizes the distribution of fentanyl test strips and other tools which are proven interventions to reduce the risk of overdose and drug-related death and ensures anyone who chooses to administer naloxone or any available short-acting opioid antagonist is protected from civil and criminal liability.

First responders and emergency medical providers will be able to distribute short-acting opioid antagonist kits to any individual who may need or request one. This will increase their ability to respond to other emergency situations and ensure better access in the community to this lifesaving emergency treatment.

The legislation is the result of a bipartisan coalition and has earned the support of harm reduction advocates, law enforcement, clinicians, students, educators, local governments and stakeholders within the state’s public health system.

Proponents of the bill include 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, Associated Students of University of Oregon, Oregon Student Association, University of Oregon, Multnomah County, Association of Oregon Counties, Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office, Lane County, Association of Oregon Counties, and more.

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