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Oregon House Responds to Fentanyl Crisis, Passes Bipartisan Opioid Harm Reduction Package

House Bill 2395 will give Oregonians struggling with opioid addiction a second chance at life

SALEM, Ore. — Today, [House Bill 2395](#), the Opioid Harm Reduction Package, passed out of the House with bipartisan support. Introduced and championed by [Representative Maxine Dexter](#) (D-Portland), the bill breaks down barriers to harm reduction tools in response to the opioid and illicit fentanyl crisis gripping Oregon's communities. In 2021 over 745 Oregonians died from opioid overdoses, and nearly three Oregonians a day die from this tragic and growing epidemic across the entire state.

House Bill 2395 makes lifesaving emergency treatments, like [naloxone](#) kits, more available in public buildings, such as restaurants, grocery stores, police departments, and schools. When administered, naloxone can restore breathing and reverse an overdose by blocking the effects of opioids.

"Naloxone is extremely safe and effective and will help us save hundreds of lives. Even if you do not have opioids in your body, there's no side effect or danger," **said Representative Dexter, a board-certified pulmonary and critical care physician.** "Our responsibility as elected leaders is to ensure the health and safety of Oregonians. With this bill we are building the infrastructure to respond to this crisis and giving Oregonians struggling with addiction a chance to receive 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.

"Over the past year, I've met with community members, families, law enforcement, and first responders who've witnessed tragedy after tragedy – and too often it's vulnerable youth who are losing their lives to an unintentional overdose. This gives our communities the tools they need to respond and save lives," **[Representative Janelle Bynum](#)** (D-Happy Valley & N Clackamas County), **a chief sponsor of the bill, said.**

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

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

“A short-acting opioid antagonist is not a miracle cure for the deeper roots of addiction, but it is an incredibly easy-to-use, affordable tool that has one purpose: to reverse an overdose,” [Representative Dacia Grayber \(D-SW Portland/East Beaverton\)](#), a firefighter and paramedic for over two decades, stated. “Making these opioid antagonists more available and accessible will, beyond all shadow of a doubt, save countless lives. And if we’re not here to do that, then what is our purpose in this work?”

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, 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 passed 48-9 and now heads to the Senate for consideration.

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