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Oregon House Passes Bipartisan Legislation to Limit Fentanyl Crisis

SALEM, OR – Today, the Oregon House of Representatives passed the amended [House Bill 2645B](#). Oregon currently does not charge for misdemeanor fentanyl possession. House Bill 2645 B creates a Class A misdemeanor penalty for possession of certain amounts of fentanyl.

According to the [Oregon Health Authority](#), the number of fatal and unintentional overdoses involving fentanyl in Oregon more than doubled from 2021 to 2022. Fentanyl is now the [leading cause](#) of death for Americans ages 18 to 49.

A [major contributor](#) to Oregon’s rising fentanyl crisis is the state’s [failed implementation](#) of Measure 110 which removed the criminal penalty for possessing small amounts of drugs with the promise of bolstering additional treatment options for Oregonians. According to the [assistant U.S. Attorney](#), Measure 110 has caused the price of fentanyl to drop significantly, while allowing the availability to increase exponentially.

Despite [nearly two-thirds](#) of Oregonians’ support for bringing back criminal penalties for drug possession, House Democrats were not willing to hold public hearings on legislation to address this and [voted down](#) House Republicans attempts to withdraw this legislation from committee.

“This legislation provides a critical tool to law enforcement to keep our communities safe. While I believe we must have real conversations surrounding Measure 110 reform, this bill allows us to start fighting this epidemic and will get fentanyl off our streets,” **said Representative Jeff Helfrich (R-Hood River)**, one of the bill’s Chief Sponsors.

Representative Helfrich is a retired Portland Police Bureau Sergeant where he served for 25 years in the line of duty.

“My community knows the pain of fentanyl all too well. It is our responsibility to do everything possible to save lives, and this legislation is a critical first step in doing just that,” **said Representative Lily Morgan (R-Grants Pass)**, one of the bill’s Chief Sponsors.

Representative Morgan is a retired 911 Dispatcher, Josephine County Sheriff’s Office Reserve Sergeant, and Parole and Probation Supervisor.

“Fentanyl is wreaking havoc right here in the Willamette Valley. As a legislative body, we have a responsibility to protect our children. Fentanyl does not care if you are a Democrat or a Republican – it is killing people across all spectrums. This legislation gives law enforcement a critical tool they need to protect our communities,” **said Representative Lucetta Elmer (R-McMinnville)**.

[Several overdoses](#) have occurred in Representative Elmer’s District, including at [Willamina High School](#).

[House Bill 2645B](#) passed the House with a 52-1 vote.

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