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Senate takes action against state's opioid epidemic

HB 4143 now will go to Gov. Kate Brown for her signature

SALEM – The opioid epidemic is a serious problem plaguing communities all over the state and the Oregon Senate did something about it today.

[House Bill 4143](#) – which passed the Senate unanimously – requires the Department of Consumer and Business Services, in consultation with Oregon Health Authority, to study and report on existing barriers to effective treatment for, and recovery from, substance use disorders. The bill also requires OHA to establish a pilot project in Coos, Jackson, Marion and Multnomah counties which can include the following elements:

- Creating a direct link between an emergency department and appropriate treatment and resources;
- Using peer recovery support mentors to facilitate the link between an emergency department and treatment resources; and
- Any other programming aimed at reducing deaths caused by opioid and opiate overdoses by providing persons who suffer from overdoses with immediate access to treatment and resources.

It also requires practitioners to register with Oregon's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to ensure the development, administration and evaluation of best practices prescribing opioids and opiates.

“Opioid addiction is a national problem, but it's particularly alarming how much it is affecting our communities right here in Oregon,” said Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “Opioid addiction is not an urban or rural issue. It's an

Oregon issue. What often starts out as treatment of pain can become something much more serious for individuals. I am proud to support this legislation. This won't solve the problem entirely, but it's a very good start."

The legislation is a priority for Gov. Kate Brown, and builds on the work began in 2017 with the creation of the Opioid Epidemic Task Force. That group brought this legislation forward with the intention of tackling this epidemic with a multi-pronged approach.

Oregon has one of the highest prescription opioid misuse rates in the nation, according to the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division. On average, three Oregonians die every week from prescription opioid overdoses, and many more develop opioid addictions. According to Mental Health America, one in 10 Oregonians suffer from some form of addiction, and the state ranks fourth in the nation in youth addiction rates. Oregon Recovers Director Mike Marshall spoke in favor of the bill during the committee process.

"Insurance barriers to treatment and recovery support exist across the board and are not limited simply to those suffering from addiction to opioids," Marshall said. "Identifying those barriers and identifying solutions will also positively improve the state's Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission's efforts to create a new continuum of care model. Although the intention of HB 4143 is to tackle the challenges of the opioid epidemic, it will have a much larger, positive impact on the state's efforts to reduce Oregon's exceptionally high addiction rates and increase the number of people in recovery."

The bill now goes to Gov. Kate Brown for her signature.

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