



SEN. KIM THATCHER

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OVERBOARD: OHA is a sinking ship, directors like rats ***Will they testify at upcoming legislative investigative hearings?***

SALEM, Ore.—Oregon Health Authority (OHA) fashioned its own iceberg by crafting a secretive strategic communications plan to exploit HIV patients and to manipulate lawmakers in what’s been called a “PR hit job” against FamilyCare, a health care provider for Oregon’s most vulnerable. The state agency is not only drowning in negative headline after another, but it is critically unmanned and is starting to look like a sinking ship.

State Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, released the following statement:

“With a wave of resignations following a huge brouhaha, we have to ask: will the people running away from OHA be able to run away from accountability? We need every actor on this stage of an executive branch gone totally off course, to testify and tell the truth. Who directed the creation of this salacious plan to exploit HIV patients and to manipulate lawmakers? Who benefited from the systematic targeting of FamilyCare? Are there other pr hit jobs being orchestrated now or that have been? Were other CCOs involved in the takedown of FamilyCare? Were any lawmakers or elected officials? There are a tremendous amount of fair, legitimate questions, and I’m going to ask every single one when we get to these critical legislative investigative hearings.”

As embattled interim director Patrick Allen prepares to helm the state agency to stiller seas, a torrent of resignations threatens his success. The agency’s Medicaid director and chief medical officer resigned and now the chief health systems officer and state Medicaid operations director resigned too. Dr. Chauhan Varsha, said about her resignation that there will be a “smooth transition.” But not only is Allen facing

mounting issues amidst scandal and chaos, he faces Democratic opposition. Senate Deputy Majority Leader Sara Gelsler, D-Corvallis,

The Lund Report also learned [BethAnne Darby may be leaving the agency](#) as well, but didn't respond to comment. Darby came on board in Nov. 2015, and worked very closely with the agency's former director Lynne Saxton, who recently was axed by the governor for the salacious communications plan.

According to *The Lund Report*, Darby also intervened during the legislative session to thwart a bill sponsored by FamilyCare that dealt with rate reimbursement. The highly controversial "communications" plan, was released in response to a public records appeal by the [Portland Tribune](#).

According to the *Portland Tribune's* Nick Budnick, the plan was forwarded between OHA's head of lobbying, Darby, Saxton and others in January as a means to manipulate the 2017 Oregon Legislature.

What some may not know is that Darby was once a Big Union *lobbyist*. And as the agency's chief spokeswoman, she makes a whopping \$154,000 a year, compared to \$114,000 for her predecessor, Patty Wentz. The average Oregon *household* income is \$54,148, meaning Darby got paid out about 280 percent of the income of the average Oregon household to craft "pr hit jobs."

Darby has said that the salacious plan's "goal will be to create enough information buzz that it causes the Legislature to question what (FamilyCare) is trying to sell."

Republicans have been working hard to counter the Union-Dem axis of control over the state that has dominated public policy decisions for decades at the detriment of real people.

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For follow-up commentary please contact Thatcher Spokesman Jonathan Lockwood at 971-645-2140.

BACKGROUND

Oregonians may soon find out the truth about the sick practice of government abuse within the state's executive branch and gain a better understanding about the inception, conception, development and execution of OHA's questionable strategic communications. Democrat state Sen. Chuck Riley, D-Hillsboro, and chairman of the Senate General Government and Accountability recently announced he will heed state Sen. Kim Thatcher's recommendation to investigate the Oregon Health Authority for questionable plans to target HIV patients and one of Oregon's health care providers.

"Who knew what and when did they know it? That's the question on everyone's mind right now," said Thatcher, R-Keizer, upon the agreement to investigate OHA. "We are thankful for Chairman Riley's decision to help us learn more about this serious issue."

Thatcher first issued out a statement, "[Brown administration sought to exploit HIV patient to aid in takedown of non-profit 'FamilyCare,'](#)" regarding her concern over OHA planning to systematically target HIV patients in hopes of exploiting one to smear FamilyCare Health, one of the state's 16 health care providers for the most vulnerable of Oregonians, these type of providers are called coordinated care organizations (CCOs). Following Thatcher's statement, mass outrage ensued from both sides the aisle and the media, erupting with anger, until [Lynne Saxton, OHA's director was axed](#). Saxton has consistently come under fire from both sides of the aisle for perpetual failure and abuse of the state agency.

Thatcher, who sits on the watchdog Senate General Government and Accountability Committee, had advocated to the committee's chairman state Sen. Chuck Riley, D-Hillsboro, that they should enact a legislative inquiry to gain much-needed information on the Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) culture of abuse.

"Right now we know what happened - OHA abused taxpayer dollars to create a smear campaign against a health care provider for the most vulnerable and planned to systematically target HIV patients. But what we do not yet know is why this was allowed to happen in the first place. We need to gain a fuller scope of the background on this horrific action. We cannot allow state agencies to use the force of government to target perceived political enemies," said Thatcher when requesting the legislative inquiries.

"It is chilling how much unchecked power exists within certain powerful agencies in our state government," said Thatcher. "When a few people in charge don't like a person, or a business, or a non-profit, they can use the might of the 800-pound gorilla government to pound them down and ride roughshod over them."

"It is highly irregular that a state agency would plan to engage in any kind of campaign to attack another entity," Riley said in a press release. "It is incumbent upon the Legislature to ensure that state agencies are accountable for their actions. The Committee on General Government and Accountability is the best group to begin delving into this issue and asking questions that Oregonians deserve to have answered."

The legislative inquiries will be held during the watchdog committee's meetings Sep. 18 through 20, at the Statehouse. More details about exact time, date and location will be released once they are finalized by the Senate Majority Office.

[OHA refused last month to let the public see the strategic plan developed to attack the health care provider, manipulate the press and manipulate lawmakers.](#) The Brown administration intentionally, and "overwhelmingly," blacked out 26 pages of emails involving its FamilyCare takedown-plan, blacking out all mention of the hit, citing "pending litigation."