



from the office of

SENATE REPUBLICAN OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 15, 2017

Jonathan Lockwood

Spokesman

971-645-2140

Riley heeds Thatcher's request for legislative investigation into OHA's insidious plans to target HIV patients and FamilyCare

SALEM, Ore.—Oregonians may finally find out the truth about the sick practice of government abuse within the state's executive branch. Democrat state Sen. Chuck Riley, D-Hillsboro, and chairman of the Senate General Government and Accountability has today announced that 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. "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, last week 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 earlier this week. "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 today. "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."

###

THATCHER'S ORIGINAL REQUEST FOR INQUIRIES FULL TEXT



from the office of

SEN. KIM THATCHER

Sen. Chuck Riley,

Our roles on the Senate General Government and Accountability Committee are ones we both take seriously. We are the watchdog for state agencies. I think we agree that Oregonians deserve to know why the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) maliciously targeted private entities and abused taxpayer dollars. We should take the opportunity to address Oregonians concerns regarding the flailing agency.

This week, following a statement my office released, OHA came under sustained, heavy fire from both sides of the aisle and the media for planning to systematically target HIV patients and FamilyCare Health, one of the state's 16 coordinated care organizations (CCOs), with a detailed and malicious public relations (PR) plan. We have been told the plan didn't happen, but can we be sure? How many HIV patients were subjected to OHA's "PR" plan? What was the director's involvement in the development of the plan? When was the governor's office informed of the plan? Who directed the development of the plan? These are serious questions and they are just the beginning.

We know the PR plan's purpose was to discredit and defame the health care provider in the eyes of the public and to manipulate lawmakers into killing FamilyCare backed legislation to make health care reimbursement rate-setting more transparent. When the PR "hit job" was uncovered, and media reports highlighted the disgraceful use of taxpayer's dollars and the abuse of government power, OHA Director Lynne Saxton resigned.

The FamilyCare matter was not the first of its kind. Last April, a Linn County Circuit Court judge issued a temporary restraining order blocking OHA, DEQ, and Oregon OSHA from implementing a similar PR plan. In that instance, OHA sought to discredit and defame Entek International, a Lebanon based manufacturer, because Entek — though it was in compliance with all existing environmental standards — may have been emitting at levels that could exceed DEQ standards the agency was lobbying to enact. In other words, they were trying to nail Entek for violations of yet to be promulgated future rules. Ironically, Entek was strongly opposed to the gross receipts tax aggressively pursued throughout the session by the Democrat majority.

OHA's pernicious PR plans cannot be discussed without mentioning that OHA has made nearly \$200 million in unlawful Medicaid payments to approximately 37,00 individuals. This is egregious especially given the \$600 million in new taxes the Legislature just adopted to fund the program. It appears, agency officials are more interested in wielding their power to punish perceived enemies than to effectively and efficiently deliver vital health care services to Oregonians.

OHA is an agency in crisis. A public inquiry into these so-called “communications” plans should be conducted. Sen. Chuck Riley, D-Hillsboro, chairman of the Senate Committee on General Government and Accountability, is uniquely positioned to address such violations of the public trust. It is extremely vital former Director Saxton as well as other agency staff, are forced to answer questions explaining the plan’s development. Oregonians deserve to know the details surrounding these plans, so the legislature can ensure no further abuses of power can occur.

Oregonians deserve a state government that is efficient, effective, and accountable; not one that wastes taxpayer dollars and uses its regulatory power to punish its perceived political enemies. Chair Riley cannot let these abuses go unaddressed.

With great concern,

Sen. Kim Thatcher