



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Testimony before House Committee on Health Care

April 29, 2013

In support of SB 384 A

Chair Greenlick and members of the committee, thank you for hearing SB 384 A. For the record, my name is Jennifer Williamson, I represent House District 36 Portland's Westside.

Opiate overdose is a serious public health problem in Oregon. In 2000, 33 Oregonians died due to opiate overdose, and last year 179 Oregonians died from opiate overdose. In 2002, 101 Oregonians died from Heroin overdose and last year we lost 143 people to Heroin overdose.

This is an issue that I care deeply about, and affects my district on a daily basis. I have a large recovery community in my district including, Outside In, Central City Concern, the Bud Clark Commons, and many other organizations working to support people in recovery.

I care deeply about this issue for very personal reasons as well. On New Year's Day, 2010 my mother overdosed on opiate pain medication. My mother struggles with chronic neck and back pain, and has for my entire life. She has undergone dozens of surgeries and procedures and seen numerous specialists to reduce her pain. In 2010 she was under the care of a physician at a pain clinic at St. Vincent Hospital. She woke up that New Year's morning and took her medications as usual. What she hadn't realized is that the pharmacy had changed the dosage; she now only needed to take one pill, not two for her correct dosage. She took two pills and fell back asleep. My mother was lucky, my father was with her and when she wouldn't wake up and had difficulty breathing he took her to the Emergency room. From there she was able to enter an inpatient treatment center and now controls her pain without narcotics. But many Oregonians are not this lucky. SB 384 can help ensure that more Oregonians have ready access to this life saving treatment.

Naloxone is a safe widely-used antidote available that can reverse an overdose. Oregon law currently allows physicians and emergency medical personnel to use Naloxone and it is common practice in emergency rooms and ambulances. SB 384A expands access to Naloxone, it allows lay people to train on, receive, and use Naloxone so they can save lives when someone overdoses. Someone like my dad, a primary caregiver to someone prescribed heavy doses of opiate based pain medication, could be trained to use this medication in the case of an emergency.

Across the country, there are close to 200 similar programs, which have been highly successful. Nine states, and Washington D.C., have laws that increase access to Naloxone. To date, over 50,000 people in the U.S. have been trained to administer Naloxone, resulting in the reversal of an estimated 10,000 overdoses. Areas with Naloxone distribution programs have seen 37 to 90 percent reduction in community-level overdose deaths.

Opiate overdoses are preventable, and SB 384 A will help save lives of Oregonians. Thank you and I urge your support of SB 384 A.