

**Deb Patterson**  
**STATE SENATOR**  
**DISTRICT 10**



February 4, 2021

Chair Evans, Vice Chair Lewis and Meek and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Today, I write to you in support of HB 2461.

As we all recall, when COVID-19 hit the United States in early 2020, one of the major issues we faced, and still face today, is the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) for our health care workers. We saw shortages of PPE across the state; doctors and nurses having to re-use PPE, putting them at a greater risk of contracting the virus. There were never enough gloves, masks, and other safety equipment to go around and, with all 50 states competing to purchase more supplies, receiving a new shipment could take weeks or even months to arrive.

In March 2020, the Oregon Health Authority reported that its emergency stockpile, which they had hoped would tide things over until a new shipment came, was completely depleted. At that time, the stockpile of gowns and splash shields had been completely used up, as well, 95% of face shields and 80% of the N-95 respirators. This was only a few months into what has turned out to be over a year-long struggle with the virus. Amidst it all, we saw communities come together to help each other. KGW reported that when PPE shortages began, hundreds of people started sewing homemade masks to send to health care workers, a testament to what our community can do when we work together.

Part of the problem we faced in depleting our emergency stockpiles of PPE could have been avoided if we had passed a bill like HB 2461 sooner. HB 2461 aims to improve our readiness and response to widespread emergencies, such as the one we are facing now. This much-needed legislation would create a disaster and resilience stockpile of emergency supplies (including a robust state-wide inventory and rotation) and decrease Oregon's reliance on outside sources for PPE and testing materials.

As a lifelong health care champion and Chair of the Senate Committee on Health Care, it has been devastating and eye-opening to watch our health care workers do what they have been silently doing for years; working day in and day out to save lives, even when it meant putting their own lives at risk. We call our health care and essential workers hero's and if we genuinely believe that, we must, in the least, pass HB 2461 to make the work they do a little safer.

Respectfully,

*Deb Patterson*