



March 25, 2021

House Committee on Health Care
Oregon State House of Representatives
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2376 to Co-Prescribe Naloxone With Opioid Prescriptions

Dear Chair Prusak and members of the committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB 2376 on behalf of Vibrant Future Coalition (VFC). VFC is a coalition in north Clackamas and east Multnomah counties that educates and creates community wide change in order to prevent youth substance use and educate about harm reduction practices. One way we do this is by distributing naloxone and educating the community on opioids, signs of an overdose, and what naloxone is and does.

The opioid epidemic is running rampant through Oregon and the rest of the United States. In 2017, 47,000 people died of opioid overdoses across the U.S. and approximately 36% of them were from prescription opioids. In the state of Oregon, at least 339 people died of overdoses in the first 6 months of 2020, which is 40% more deaths than the same time period in 2019 and 35% more than in the last six months of 2019. In the entire year of 2018, 339 people died of opioid overdoses in Oregon (the same number that died in the first half of 2020), with 151 of those being from prescriptions. It is clear that opioid misuse and overdoses has increased dramatically over the last few years, and with the stress people are experiencing with the pandemic, this number is expected to continue rising.

Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the United States and so many could have been prevented if people were educated and prepared. Naloxone is an opioid antagonist that binds to opiate receptors to temporarily reverse the effects of an overdose. It has no risk of dependency or misuse and is even safe for pets, kids, and pregnant folks. Naloxone only works if a person has opioids in their system and you cannot take naloxone prior to consuming opioids.

HB2376 would require health care providers to offer a naloxone prescription to people who are prescribed high doses of opiates, are prescribed opiates and benzodiazepines (like Valium or Xanax), or have a history of overdosing or substance use disorder. Additionally, health care providers would need to educate people about the risks of overdoses, which has the ability to lessen the chance of accidental overdoses.

The CDC and US Federal Guidelines recommend health care providers co-prescribe naloxone with opioids, and 11 states have similar guidelines to the ones outlined in HB2376. States with co-prescribing laws have seen a 9% to 11% reduction in opioid deaths and a 63% decrease in emergency room visits for those who were co-prescribed naloxone with an opiate.

Naloxone has the ability to save lives with virtually no downfalls or side effects. Our country is in the middle of an opioid epidemic and something needs to be done. HB2376 follows guidelines put out by the CDC and would require health care providers to co-prescribe naloxone and educate patients about the risks of opioids and overdosing.

Thank you for your time.

May Yates on behalf of Vibrant Future Coalition