



March 7, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Education

From: Emerson Hamlin, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for SB 238

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA is a nurses union and professional association representing over 15,000 health care workers and providers, including registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health, and county health departments across Oregon.

Nurses in Oregon are on the front lines of the opioid epidemic. Our emergency department nurses in particular are reporting seeing an increased number of patients who are unintentionally overdosing, including teenagers and other young people. Their experience is supported by OHA's December overdose surveillance update, which found that opioid overdose visits to emergency rooms and urgent care clinics were higher in 2022 than they had been in previous years. Far worse, opioid deaths jumped more than 600% between 2019 and 2021. Oregonians across the state are struggling, and we need to look for diverse, creative solutions.

Senate Bill 238 is one of those solutions. By teaching our young people about the risks associated with using opioids, and ensuring they know that Good Samaritan laws offer legal protections for individuals seeking medical help for those experiencing overdoses, they can make informed decisions. More importantly, they can keep themselves and their peers safe by calling for help when they need it. Our nurses believe this bill will save lives. ONA urge your support of SB 238. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin

Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association