

From: Cody Johnson

RE: Letter of Opposition to SB60

Hello. First, thank you for your service to our state; the proposals and bills that come through your committee considerably impact our communities; your time and dedication are appreciated.

I strongly **oppose** SB60 and removing requirements for an associate degree or higher for paramedics.

When I first met my spouse, who has been in EMS (Emergency Medical Services) for over twenty years, I assumed, based on what he told me he did, that his college education was nearing that of a physician assistant or even more. I was taken aback that it was only an associate degree. While medicine is not my profession, the skill set and clinical decision-making required for his profession are profound. Lessening the college education would significantly reduce respect, wages, and preparation to serve our community best.

After reading the few letters of support, I was bothered by the misinformation within those documents. A simple review of Oregon law reveals that the degree requirement is specific to paramedics, the highest level of prehospital care provider, not all providers, as noted in at least one letter. I also reviewed one concern about hiring EMTs and paramedics; somehow, the author is associating the degree requirement with a reduced ability to hire qualified providers. By a simple Google search, the hiring crisis related to hiring EMTs and paramedics is systemic throughout the United States and most of the world; it is not isolated to a single state such as Oregon or specific population demographics; it is seen both rurally and in urban areas in all states that either have or don't have degree requirements (there is more than Oregon that requires a degree for paramedics). Oregon, a degree-requiring state, does not simply follow the national standard for paramedic care; it exceeds it with additional skills that other states do not allow...further warranting advanced educational needs.

Instead of reducing the education for such an important skill and clinical knowledge set, we should continue to redirect energy, as the state has recently done, to direct funds towards Current Technical Education (CTE) programs, better wages and benefits, and awareness of this incredible and honorable career field. This shortage is similar to other healthcare fields, such as nursing, but the thoughts to reduce those educational requirements have not shifted. Can we imagine why? The risks to our communities and families are far too great.

Thank you,

Cody Johnson