



800 NE Oregon Street, Suite 465
Portland, OR 97232
Voice: (971) 673-0520
FAX: (971) 673-0555
TTY: 711

<http://www.healthoregon.org/ems>
ems.trauma@odhsosha.oregon.gov

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TO: The Honorable Senator Deb Patterson
Chair, Senate Committee on Health Care
The Honorable Senator Cedric Hayden
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Health Care

FROM: Dana Selover, MD, MPH
Section Manager Health Care Regulation and Quality Improvement
State EMS and Trauma Systems Director

SUBJECT: Information on SB 60 and Impacts

This memo seeks to provide information to the committee on the impact passage of SB 60 would have on the Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division's, EMS and Trauma Systems Program and to the community and patient care.

Impacts to OHA:

- The bill will require the OHA EMS and Trauma Systems Program to amend administrative rules and modify licensing systems and processes to remove the requirement for the Paramedic level to have an associate degree.
- The -1 amendment requires the Authority to prepare a report for the legislature on the impacts this measure has had on recruitment and retention of paramedics and the workforce crisis in Oregon, including possible recommendations for legislation. The EMS and Trauma Systems program is interpreting the statement about the workforce crisis to be narrowly focused on EMS workforce crisis.

Impact to the community and patient care:

While OHA has no position on the bill, the -1 amendment for SB 60 have the potential to substantially disrupt paramedic education and licensing and also negatively impact patient care in the process. While the bill's intent is to increase EMS provider availability, the changes may only achieve a marginal improvement in EMS provider workforce availability yet cause some disruption and confusion in licensing EMS providers. The sudden removal of the paramedic requirement may cause confusion for currently enrolled students about long-term impacts of a temporary change in education requirements. The EMS and Trauma Systems program has existing authority to make changes to education requirements in administrative rule and intends to convene a rules advisory committee in

June 2023 to review draft changes to the associate degree requirement for paramedic licensees.

Currently, Oregon Administrative Rule requires that an applicant for a Paramedic license must hold an associate degree. This requirement was adopted in administrative rule in July 1999 and to date has been largely supported by the EMS education consortium and EMS agencies. Exceptions to this requirement are available for: 1) Paramedics seeking reciprocity who have worked three of the last five years as a licensed Paramedic in another state are eligible for licensure without meeting the degree requirement; and 2) Paramedics with fewer than 3 of the last 5 years as a licensed paramedic, who can apply for a provisional paramedic license while they are still working toward a degree completion.

Paramedics are unique in healthcare as they perform some of the highest risk emergency medical procedures and administer high risk medication treatments in the field often under extreme conditions. They are also the only allied health professional license at this level of responsibility for which a degree is not required in all states. The level of responsibility is increasing as nontraditional models of EMS care are emerging to address needs in the healthcare system: mobile integrated health care, public health response, and behavioral crisis response (Leggio et al., 2021). Paramedic and prehospital care continue to evolve at the clinician level to support current needs of the medical system to reduce hospital readmissions, manage complex chronic medical and behavioral situations and facilitate interfacility transfers of critically ill patients (Leggio et al., 2021). The degree enhances the development and support of foundational understanding appropriate for clinicians with the inclusion of college-level coursework as a complement to the technical training ([Leggio et al., 2021](#); [Perona et al, 2019](#)).

The National Association of EMS Physicians, National Association of EMS Educators, National EMS Management Association and the International Association of Flight and Critical Care Paramedics published position statements advocating for a degree requirement at the paramedic level (Caffrey et al., 2018; Leggio et al., 2022). Prehospital systems of care in Oregon are expanding as well and many factors of success must be considered, including educational readiness for expanded paramedic roles.