



Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

My name is Erica Bailey. I am a registered nurse and a Commissioner on the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA).

OCBA serves the people of Oregon to empower and support the African American and Black community through our unique roles as policy advisors to Oregon state policymakers and leaders. OCBA is a catalyst that allows partnerships between the state government and our community in rural and urban areas to ensure success for all African American and Black Oregonians by addressing longstanding and emerging issues at the policy level, including but not limited to social, political, legal, and economic equity. OCBA has several statutory duties, all of which revolve around advocacy and equity.

I write to you today in support of House Bill 2395 A, which will make short-acting opioid antagonists more widely available and easily accessible, a critical step towards reducing opioid overdoses in Oregon.

According to the Opioid Overdose Public Health Surveillance Update in 2022 (Oregon Health Authority), opioid overdose-related visits to urgent care clinics and emergency departments have risen dramatically since 2019. Tragically, according to the same report, over the last four years, there have been more than 1800 unintentional opioid overdose deaths in Oregon. Simply put, more widely available and accessible short-acting opioid antagonists could prevent these unintentional deaths and save thousands of lives.

Communities of color are among the most vulnerable to unintentional overdose deaths. Oregon Health Authority (OHA) reports that stressors and poverty disproportionately affect people at the highest risk of unintended fatal overdose incidents. Mortality rates are highest among Black Oregonians, with rates nearly twice that of White Oregonians and Native American/Alaska Native residents, whose rates are 2.5 times greater.

Just a few days ago, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved selling naloxone over the counter, an essential step towards addressing the nationwide overdose crisis, which

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claims more than 100,000 lives each year (Mulvihill, 2023). Washington state has also recently made the short-acting opioid antagonist, naloxone, widely available, and anyone is now legally allowed to acquire and administer it under state law. It only makes sense that Oregon takes this next step toward preventing overdose deaths.

According to Caleb Banta-Green, an epidemiologist and professor at the University of Washington School of Medicine, short-acting opioid antagonists are safe to use even if someone is not experiencing an overdose. “If a healthy person who is not facing an overdose were to take the medication, it wouldn’t harm them” (Magana, 2023).

HB 2395 A will ensure these potentially lifesaving treatments are more widely available and readily accessible where needed. We must do what we can to prevent unintentional and unnecessary death in Oregon, and thus I urge you to vote yes on House Bill 2395 A.

Sincerely,



Erica Bailey MS, RN, BC-NC

Commissioner, Oregon Commission on Black Affairs

Sources


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