

April 21th 2023

**Senate Committee on Health Care  
RE: Opioid Harm Reduction**



Dear Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

The Vibrant Future Coalition calls on you to support policies that address Oregon's opioid crisis. **Harm reduction is our first line of defense against opioid overdoses. Implementing policies that increase access and availability of naloxone and harm reduction supplies will save countless lives!**

The Vibrant Future Coalition focuses on youth drug and alcohol prevention in North Clackamas and East Multnomah Counties. We strive to prevent opioid misuse and overdoses by providing presentations on the dangers of opioid misuse, how to administer naloxone, and distributing naloxone in high-risk areas in our community. **As prevention specialists, we feel there is no time to waste, and opioid harm reduction policies must be implemented now!**

**The impact of Oregon's opioid crisis is devastating and widespread:**

- Nearly one in five Oregonians struggle with addiction.
- Oregon ranks first in the nation for prescription opioid misuse.
- Oregon ranks 50th in access to treatment, with 18% of Oregonians needing but not receiving treatment.
- From 2020 to 2021, there was a 125% increase in fentanyl-related overdose deaths.
- The rate of opioid-related ED visits between 2020–2021 increased in every age group except children under 10 years of age.
- In 2021, \$47 million was spent on opioid-related overdose hospitalizations, with Medicaid charges accounting for almost half (47%) of that amount.

Many people, especially youth, who experience a fentanyl-related overdose unintentionally ingest fentanyl. **Counterfeit pills containing fentanyl are so rampant that our local public health officials urge the public to assume that any pill or substance not directly obtained from a pharmacy contains fentanyl.** With the state's alarming levels of opioid misuse and overdoses, naloxone should be available in every public building, including schools, and those who administer naloxone need assurance that they will not face civil or criminal penalties.

We urge you to advocate for harm reduction policies to help mitigate the impact of the state's opioid crisis and reduce the number of lives lost. **Thank you for protecting youth and our most vulnerable populations.** Please reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Michelle Bollinger*

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Vibrant Future Coalition

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