



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

April 12, 2023

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Hayden, Members of the Committee,

The Oregon State Fire Fighter Council represents 3700 professional firefighters within the State of Oregon, ranging from Astoria to Pendleton to Ashland. Every day those 3700 members go to work to make a difference in the lives of the public that we serve.

One of the strengths that has made our council strong is that we all do the job of firefighter in addition to our work in the capital. I work for a large metropolitan department and our President, Karl Koenig, retired from Clackamas Fire Department recently having served a 30-year career in the fire service.

I am testifying today because of the moral and ethical dilemma that our firefighters face every day in the State of Oregon. In addition to responding to emergencies such as house fires, motor vehicle accidents, and hazardous material calls we also respond to emergency medical calls such as opioid overdoses. These overdoses are very traumatic for those that are involved. Occasionally, we have people that call and then leave. More commonly, we witness the extreme emotional turmoil that occurs when a friend or family member is not breathing, and we are breathing for them and providing life saving medications. Depending on the amount of opioids that were taken, the response from the patient can be rather quick (depending on route of administration—IV Narcan works quicker than nasal Narcan.) Those with high doses of Fentanyl can require much more Narcan and aggressive treatment—and this is also becoming an issue that we see on a day-to-day basis. With the hospital systems becoming more and more busy and resources stretched thin it is very common to have these patients left on scene and not be transported to the hospital. It is important that any administration of Narcan by the public include medical treatment for the patient; this administration does not replace medical evaluation.

House Bill 2395-A gives first responders the opportunity to leave Narcan on scene with the patient and their family and friends. I want to emphasize that for those patients, family, and friends this experience has been very emotional and difficult. They just watched someone that they care about stop breathing and needing emergency responders to save the patient's life. The first responders need to have the ability to distribute Narcan in this type of situation in case the patient's conditions worsen and very importantly to give the patient's family and friends a sense of assurance that if they need to give Narcan again to this patient they have the ability to do so. Similar to existing protocols at this time, we would need this distribution to be concurrent with the practice of ensuring that emergency services are called when an emergency occurs; this is not a replacement for calling 911 or seeking medical attention. We are asking the committee to consider not putting first responders in the moral and ethical dilemma of leaving the scene of an emergency call without providing this life saving medication to those who need it.

Karl Koenig
President

Alan Ferschweiler
Legislative Director