

Submitter: Joseph Gramer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: SB607

Honorable House members. I strongly support Senate Bill 607, which asks elected officials to hold up a metaphorical magnifying glass to the Oregon Pain Management Commission.

I've no financial or other conflicts of interest. I'm the most basic of all stakeholders: a chronic pain patient, one of those persons for whose sake the OPMC was founded in the first place.

Soon after I retired due to disability in late 2015, I read of the OPMC online. I was thrilled initially, thinking I'd found official allies. Quoting from their then posted mission statement: "The confusion and misconceptions of tolerance, physical dependence, and addiction contribute to the problem of poor pain management." And this, "Fear of causing addiction to opioids is a major barrier to appropriate pain management."

Soon, testifying in person to the OPMC, I cited such quotes. Commissioners didn't seem to appreciate this. Reactions were condescending, a few outright hostile. By strange coincidence, within days of that meeting their website material changed. Balanced statements regarding medicinal pain management vanished, replaced by uncompromising anti-opioid fervor. Commissioners have advocated for non-medicinal treatments which do seem to help some people. That's cool, although it's notable that some of these commissioners stood to gain as professionals in PT, acupuncture and the like.

But more glaring than potential conflicts of interest is the OPMC's runaway anti-opioid bigotry. They have seemed determined to stamp out opiate-based pain medicine. This regardless of patients' individual diagnoses, histories, or circumstances. This in defiance of any science, statistics or evidence that might conflict with fundamentalist opiophobia. The OPMC and certain other supposedly patient-centered groups have painted everything with an addiction brush, laboring to quash any notion that opiates – in effective use for centuries if not millennia – have any acceptable place in pain treatment.

The OPMC has joined in falsities and misinformation to blur the actual distinction between patients who take medicine and addicts who do drugs. Their crusade against opiate medicine has far exceeded any real care and concern for pain patients' actual experience, and our ongoing cry for de-stigmatization and individualized pain management. The OPMC has abandoned the balanced humanity it was formed to embody. For many disabled Oregonians, the OPMC as it's been is a pretty sinister group, deaf to us, doing much more harm than good. In fairness, not all

current OPMC members subscribe to extremism. My thanks to them.

With that, honorable representatives, I urge you to please hear the Oregon pain community's demand for fairness, respect, and compassion – in this and other matters. Please champion and pass Senate Bill 607. Thank you.