

January 30, 2025

Written by Winona Vaitekunas

Submitted to the House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Regarding HB 2143

To Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs, and Committee,

My name is Winona Vaitekunas and I have been a resident of Oregon for four years. The reason I moved to Oregon is because of its leadership in our nation's acupuncture profession. Since relocating, I have provided acupuncture treatments as a student intern through POCA Technical Institute and offered 5NP treatments at CODA's addiction treatment program, for Breast Friends' community of breast cancer patients and survivors, and in conference room pop-ups supporting staff and visitors in the Oregon State Capitol. It is with these experiences in mind that I urge you to support HB 2143.

It is through Oregon acupuncturists that I learned the impact and history of community acupuncture and 5NP. This history began in 1970s New York City when use of the 5 Needle Protocol developed at the Lincoln Detox Acupuncture Program. Lincoln Detox became a fixture of hope in the South Bronx as it efficiently detoxed tens of thousands of people off of drugs.

The 5 points included in this 5 Needle Protocol include two points for calming the nervous system and three points supporting the body's detoxification organs: liver, kidney, and lungs. Over five decades of evidence has suggested that using 5NP can improve patient outcomes in terms of program retention, reductions in cravings, anxiety, sleep disturbance and need for pharmaceuticals. Evidence continues to grow in areas of behavioral health, trauma, and cancer care. This protocol continues to be used all over the world from addiction recovery centers to emergency rooms to communities affected by traumatic humanitarian crises.

I have personally experienced substantial improvement in my quality of life through 5NP treatments. 5NP has allowed me to experience decreased anxiety and has greatly improved my ability to navigate traumatic and stressful situations in all areas of my life.

Currently, at least 28 states allow 5NP treatments by practitioners outside of Licensed Acupuncturists including: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming. While over half our country is utilizing this life changing medicine, Oregon has no access to this safe and effective protocol outside of its licensed acupuncturists.

Meanwhile, the Oregon Health Authority states that excessive alcohol use remains the third leading cause of preventable death among Oregonians. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports Oregon having the highest percentage of illicit drug use disorder, methamphetamine use, and reported prescription opioid misuse in the country. This reality is what drives the State's, and this committee's, goals of reducing substance use and improving behavioral health.

Currently, there is only one acupuncturist per every 2,658 residents in Oregon, the majority of whom are located within the Willamette Valley, leaving access in other parts of our state even more dire. 5NP could exist in recovery meetings in rural churches, in crisis shelters, public libraries and local community centers with regular and dependable access to treatments given by members of their own community. Not only will this bill open up the diversity of access, it will allow diversity of who can administer this life saving medicine.

I have witnessed the way 5NP treatments can affect a teenage recovery group: phones forgotten, gossip paused in exchange for quiet moments of peace. I've seen your constituents and even some of your own staff find relief from their stress when they've been able to sit for a moment with only these five points in their ears. Imagine AA or NA groups where they could start every meeting with a non-pharmaceutical way to reduce cravings for their members, if only one of them could administer 5NP.

HB 2143 offers more Oregonians access to a simple treatment that requires little set-up, minimal supplies, and a wide range of beneficial applications.

Please support HB 2143.

Thank you.