

Submitter: Nancy Whitson

House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care Measure,
Regarding HB 2143

January 30, 2025

To Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Nelson and Javadi, and Members of the
Committee:

My name is Nancy Whitson. I'm a Portland resident, currently receiving acupuncture. I'm also a retired health care provider with 40 years experience as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Women's Health Nurse Practitioner, and Nurse Midwife.

I'm writing in support of HB 2143, for its potential to put into the hands of Oregon communities a practical and effective, easy to access, defined aspect of acupuncture, one which can greatly increase people's and communities' ownership and agency in their own health, well-being, and mutual care.

I've spent my life working in Public Health, with a passion for communities' ability to create health and wellbeing for themselves and each other.

I am currently a caregiver for my 74 y/o brother, who had a debilitating stroke in 2011 which left him without the ability to speak and many other health conditions. As a tenured professor at the University of Delaware he had bought what is considered Cadillac health insurance. Since even the Cadillac ones are in the business of setting so many limits on care, it's been a constant struggle to get him the care he needs, leaving many health needs unmet. What happened to him could happen to anyone, at any moment. I wish he had had access to acupuncture, which could have diminished his stress and trauma, and potentially improved his response to the treatments he has received.

I began getting acupuncture last October when his conditions started worsening, and the stress, discouragement and depression became too great for me. I live on Social Security income, so acupuncture was never

affordable for me, and I only learned that I could access it after a WCA clinic opened in my neighborhood and I happened to pass by.

Thanks to WCA's community acupuncture model, I've been able to get frequent enough treatments that I can now sleep through the night and have begun to crawl out of the sense of loss and overwhelm, and feel able to cope with the challenges of current life in the midst of the instabilities and disruptions we are all now facing in our lives and in our systems.

My best friend, who has struggled with terminal cancer for 3 years, is now starting her last possible chemo drug, which is a notoriously miserable one. In LA where she lives, there are no WCA clinics, and 5NP is not allowed without an acupuncture license. She can't afford acupuncture treatment.

Not only that, but in her Medical Care Team, including the Palliative Care Nurse Practitioner she saw for side-effect management, before initiating the chemo, no-one even mentioned acupuncture—so a simple, safe, effective mode of alleviating suffering for her and others in her situation, does not even appear on the table.

Making the 5NP Protocol legal in Oregon would not only allow this health modality to become accessible to hundreds of Oregonians with health care needs that aren't met, it would allow acupuncture to be more widely seen and generally known as an integral part of health care, so that providers know its potential and have available it as another effective, accessible cost-effective tool in their tool-kits.

I attended the Committee hearing on this bill on Thursday, and appreciate also all the testimony on the other bills brought that day, all painting a stunning picture of the depth of unmet health care needs all over Oregon. I'm grateful that your committee exists and takes on the daunting work of trying to meet this need.

I urge you to pass this bill, as I am convinced it would provide a large measure of needed care for Oregonians, and strengthen the health of our communities.