

April 23, 2025
SB 5525 Testimony
Oregon Poison Center
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Managing Director

My name is Charisse Pizarro-Osilla, and I am the Managing Director of the Oregon Poison Center at OHSU. I'm here today to discuss the vital work of our center, which plays a significant role in the health and safety of our Oregon communities.

When someone in the community calls our Poison Center, our poison specialists, with their unique expertise, decide whether the poisoning can be managed at home or referred to the hospital. Last year, 93% of accidental home poisonings were managed and kept at home. We didn't have to send them to the hospital. By not sending them to the ER, the Oregon Poison Center saves the public healthcare expenses and also avoids unnecessary visits in an already overcrowded emergency room.

If we refer callers to the hospital, we help providers manage our poisoned patients. We provide consultation services in treating patients. Toxicology is unique and often changing; not many medical providers are educated in this field. Our consults often result in decreased length of stay, which translates to significant cost savings in healthcare expenses for the public, hospitals, and the government, and it is good for the patients and their families.

I want to share with you some comments from our callers, the citizens of Oregon.

"I'm grateful that the poison control line was available. I was preparing for spinal surgery and inadvertently took Percocet and Tylenol together. I was home with my daughter, who was very frightened. I very much appreciate the calm, informative, and reassuring way my concerns were addressed by the wonderful person who answered the phone. I also used it as an opportunity to educate my teen about the service and how she might need to use it in the future. Kudos to the Poison Center!"

"I have had to call poison control on three separate occasions within the last 6 months. Each time the nurses were more than helpful, attentive, nonjudgmental and calming. My toddler had gotten a hold of an ink pen and sucked the ink out of it. The nurse not only stayed on the phone the entire time while trying to get the ink out but also called to follow up. The most recent was an accidental deploy of an epi pen on my husband's finger and once again the nurse stayed on the phone explained how the medicine in the body works, the side effects to monitor for and the low risk given to the site of the epi pen stick. We also received a follow-up call as well. We are more than grateful for poison control and the several ER trips that we didn't have to make due to the help we received."

We ask our callers what they would do if there is no poison center in Oregon. In January of this year, about 1/3 of the callers who responded said that they would go to an emergency room. The poison center helps decrease emergency room crowding and again, healthcare costs. We provide the right care, for the right people and at the right time. The staff at the poison center makes a difference, one life at a time.

Thank you for your support throughout the years and the opportunity to tell you about our good works.