



A project of the Alano Club of Portland

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2257 SUBMITTED BY OREGON RECOVERS

Chair Greenlick, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2257 this afternoon.

My name is Mike Marshall and I'm here today as the Founder and Director of Oregon Recovers. I'm also a person in long-term recovery which for me means I've not had a drink or drug in 11 years.

The mission of Oregon Recovers is to transform Oregon's fractured and incomplete addiction recovery system into a recovery-based, continuum of care that recognizes addiction as a chronic disease requiring five years of recovery support. We strongly support HB 2257 because we believe it substantively and meaningfully contributes to our mission.

We support all aspects of this legislation, but Oregon Recovers wants to draw your attention to two specific aspects of the bill.

Section 1 very clearly defines, within state law, **that addiction is a chronic disease**. While people in this room may think this is a given, we need to realize that the belief that addiction is in fact a moral failing, is still prevalent across the state. In my day-to-day work, I see first-hand the reluctance of people to seek treatment or stay in recovery because of the stigma attached to addiction. By clearly making it state policy that addiction is a disease and not a moral failing, we are empowering people in recovery, friends and family, and the addiction recovery workforce to demand the treatment and recovery support which is needed, when it is needed.

Additionally, Oregon Recovers applauds the inclusion of Section 13, which provides **legal protection for frontline healthcare workers engaged in the critically important work of harm reduction**. We know that strengthening harm reduction efforts in Oregon is critical to the development of a comprehensive addiction recovery continuum of care. Needle exchange efforts are proven life-saving programs and need to be supported by the state.

I'll end by reminding you that 2100 people in Oregon will die from drugs or alcohol in 2019. Today alone, we will lose 6 or 7 good, decent people. We are in the midst of a crisis. HB 2257 will not end this crisis but it does take important steps toward diminishing it.

Oregon Recovers strongly supports this legislation and applauds Governor Brown for moving it forward.

Thank you.