

To Members of the House Committee on Health Care

From Laura Rose Misaras

March 7, 2019

RE: Testimony in Support of HB2831 Peer Run Respite

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Laura Rose Misaras and I am sharing today why I support HB2831 to establish peer-run respite in Oregon.

First of all, this is our wonderful state of Oregon! A place of natural beauty and wonder, from the coast to the mountains, from the valley to the desert, forests and gardens. And people who want to authentically live by their values, to serve their communities, and make a positive difference in this lifetime. And, sadly, there are people who don't know if they can stand to be on this planet for one more moment because the pain inside is so deep, the losses they have suffered, unimaginable, their fears so overwhelming, their struggle has left them exhausted yet sleepless, their hearts choking with crushing despair, rage against the self, and some see no way out, intrusive thoughts shouting or crying at them that they are useless, worthless, expendable, forgotten, powerless, and... what happens next...

A peer can interrupt that cycle in a flash. "I have time to listen. I can relate. You are not alone in this. I will walk with you, and we can learn together." A shift of perspective, a reframing, a reflection, a thought partner. Oregon has some beautiful homes and spaces where people can grab a few nights' sleep, get a break from the stressors, collect one's thoughts and chart a new course with support and encouragement along the way. Bringing in wraparound peer support at a peer run respite can be a community win-win.

Too often, the person in crisis gets handed a clipboard full of forms to fill out with questions about insurance – imagine being told no one can listen to you not even for five minutes – and being directed that you need to fill out these forms and try to recall – in the midst of crisis – irrelevant data, id numbers, addresses for emergency contacts, and oh, you have to summarize your situation and trauma history in 2 lines. This is a formula that typically fuels increased stress and tension. What some call "respite" – like being put up in a motel room for one night with no support in place – is a far cry from fidelity of peer run respite which is available in at least 14 other states. Oregon's network and community of peers and allies around the state have invested many hours researching model programs, policies, rules, budgets, and more. I support Oregon advancing and realizing the long-awaited benefits of peer run respite.

Sincerely,

Laura Rose Misaras