

Dear Legislators and Members of the Senate Health Care Committee,

I am writing to you today in support of SB 808. I am also writing to you today as an Oregonian who has spent a nearly 40-year career in suicide prevention. I have traveled to 10 countries and US Territories, and 23 States, training and consulting on suicide prevention. I have been on every legislature-approved suicide prevention committee that Oregon has had, including two Youth Suicide Prevention Plans and the Older Adult Suicide Prevention Plan. I am the immediate past-Chair of the Oregon Alliance for Suicide Prevention. I know what I am talking about.

While it defies logic, the professional literature tells us that licensed mental health professionals are among the worst at dealing with situations of suicide risk. Their tendency is to hospitalize, rather than treat. Hospitals are stigmatizing, they are dangerous places for people with serious suicide thoughts, and they are expensive.

The deficit in professionals is not of intention or will, but of education. Asking about suicide and treating it is NOT something taught in graduate school, but the skills are easily learned. This is why State after State are requiring training as indicated in SB 808. Please vote in favor of it.

Best regards,

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