

Good morning Chair Prozanski, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning in support of SB 755, funding for the Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act.

My name is Janie Gullickson. I am the Executive Director of the Mental Health & Addiction Association of Oregon. We are an inclusive peer-run organization committed to promoting self-directed recovery and wellness for all. We honor lived experiences. We support people wherever they are on their journey, free from judgment or agenda. We support these aims through education, advocacy, recovery peer services, training, technical assistance, community collaboration, and through developing the peer workforce and leadership. We believe that all individuals who experience mental health and/or addiction challenges can recover and that recovery, its journey and process, is unique to the individual.

The Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act is the most innovative and hopeful solution I've seen in my career of working in the recovery field in Oregon.

Recovery is a very personal experience, and there's no "one size fits all" model. For people with addictions, there is nothing as powerful as being able to relate your lived experience with someone who has shared similar struggles, and to be able to work together toward living a healthy, productive life -- one day at a time. This 'peer support' is something all successful recovery models share and peer support in and of itself is a trauma-informed care practice.

Drug treatment gives people a way out of their addictions, while recovery support services create the foundation for long term recovery. A person can go through treatment, but if they don't have access to community-based recovery support services when they complete treatment, they often relapse. And relapse can mean the difference between life and death. For families of loved ones with addictions, relapse can mean losing them -- either literally, to an overdose, or because their loved one is simply unreachable while in the throws of their addiction.

SB 755 will fund expansion of treatment and recovery support services in more parts of the state, providing the dual support that healthcare providers and recovery leaders agree are essential to long term recovery. Recovery houses provide a safe place for those with addictions to explore and find recovery. The Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act makes recovery more accessible throughout Oregon by providing funding to immediately assess people's individual needs and link them to treatment, care and services. It increases peer support and recovery services to help people stay on track, and offers housing for persons in all phases of recovery.

I am confident that the Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act offers a real solution to Oregon's addiction crisis not only because of my professional experience, but also because I am in long term recovery myself.

To give you the “Reader’s Digest” version of my story: I was addicted to drugs. I lived on the streets, unable to care for myself and had lost everything. I sought treatment multiple times but couldn’t get it. Instead, I got arrested, again and again. Sometimes my drug use landed me in the emergency room. But when I got out of jail or the ER, I didn’t get much help, and I often didn’t have anywhere to go.

This cycle continued—for 22 years.

Eventually I got the treatment and recovery support I needed. But it took far too long. Through this experience, I learned a lot about how Oregon addresses drugs and addiction. This is what I am sure of: criminalizing addiction doesn’t work, but a health-based approach can save lives.

When people have access to the care, services and support they need to recover, their lives change. Families are reunited. Suffering is alleviated. Trauma is healed and people like me become contributing members of their communities.

Just as active addiction impacts far more than the person who suffers from it, so does the gift of recovery. I want all Oregonians struggling with addiction to have the chance to experience the gift of recovery. That’s why I was proud to serve as a Chief Petitioner for Ballot Measure 110, and why I’m here urging you to support SB 755.

When it comes to providing addiction recovery support services, we know what works. We know who is providing services where, and providers are already in close communication with one another. With decreased capacity and an increased need for services due to COVID-19, providers are already working together to help people access services during this challenging time. We’re doing everything we can to help individuals in need navigate a system that is severely under resourced. Funding from the Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act can help us help more people. Please support SB 755 and work to quickly pass this legislation so that Oregonians struggling with addiction can access services that can save their lives. I should know, because addiction recovery services saved mine.