

I am writing today in support of SB 755 and the implementation of treatment services immediately for Oregon residents. We struggle here in Oregon with our access to mental health and addiction services already, I have had first hand experience with this. I have been actively sober for 20, almost 21 years now and I know, without a doubt, if I hadn't had access to treatment services when I needed them, I would not have been able to get sober.

Addiction is a disease that ravages our bodies, our minds, and our spirits, along with our families, friends and our whole lives. It is often misunderstood, but it is literally as serious as a heart attack. Like any other disease, there are realistic and sustainable treatment options... we must make sure those options are fully accessible to all who need them, when they need them. We wouldn't ask to postpone treatment services for those with diabetes or kidney failure, we should not expect people with this real disease to wait either. This is a matter of life and death.

As an addict, I know that there was a small window that opened when I was willing and able to get help. Had I been denied or ignored when I needed help, I honestly don't know if I would be sober today. The longer we wait to implement these programs, the more people die. And many of those who make it through will experience a significant amount of pain and suffering that we have the power to help with.

Additionally, we are currently dealing with one of the largest public health crisis of our lifetimes. While addiction falls under the same description, I am referring to COVID. I bring this up because there are so many people currently suffering deeply and struggling to hold on in any way they know how, including self medicating. This is a perfect example of why we cannot afford to wait any longer to provide access to treatment services for all Oregonians.