

Dear Rep Sanchez, Rep Nosse, and the behavioral health committee, thank you for making time for this bill. My name is Tony, and I am a person in long-term recovery from alcohol and other drugs. I am also the executive director of 4D Recovery. I am all in on ACRA.

Substance use is a chronic health condition that can be treated with a variety of services. This statement isn't opinion, it's scientific fact. Despite this, Oregon continues to prioritize the sale, regulation, and distribution of addictive substances over the prevention and treatment of addiction.

For example, in 2017 Oregon spent approximately 240 million on the regulation and compliance of addictive substances while only spending 168 million on treatment and just 7 million on prevention. This disparity is not only unconscionable, but also wasteful, as burden spending – the amount of funding spent on health and social problems associated with substance use – was over 6 billion. It is easy to see why Oregon is what many are calling the “addiction state,” a place where it is easier to get substances, than it is to recover from them.

Solving Oregon's addiction crisis led by the Alcohol and Drug Policy Commissions' Executive Director, Dr. Reggie Richardson, a Black man, and Representative Tawna Sanchez, a Native woman who identifies in long-term recovery. The lack of action in addressing this issue brings front and center a conflict between progressive rhetoric and progressive action: on the one hand Oregon is declaring the voices of culturally diverse people – and people with lived experience – as important, and on the other hand the legislature has left Dr. Richardson and Rep. Sanchez rotting on the vine.

But they are not rotting alone, ACRA is the product of years of organizing and advocating. An initiative led by people in recovery, treatment agencies, policy makers, healthcare providers, and our friends and family. We all stand with Rep Sanchez and Dr. Richardson, and I personally applaud the backbone and leadership they exhibit on this issue.

I have reached a painful reality that pockets of the alcohol industry were too deep for democratic action in Oregon, but that day is soon coming to an end because truth is liberation, and the truth is that alcohol has gone too long without paying its fair share in ameliorating the damages it causes our community.

While justice in America is painstaking, and incremental, it happens. As many of us say on the streets: everything comes out in the wash – and it's time for the legislature to prioritize this issue.

The legislature can prioritize democracy by listening to the people, and the people are calling for substance use to be a top priority.

The legislature can prioritize cultural diversity by listening to Dr. Richardson and Rep. Sanchez on this issue.

The legislature can prioritize the people by funding the addiction crisis recovery act and aligning resources with the ADPC's strategic plan.

And the legislature can prioritize the lives of Oregonians by putting treatment services over the sale, distribution, and regulation of life-destroying substances.

Today, I urge the legislature to take action and fund the addiction crisis recovery act.