



Preventing Substance Abuse & Suicide

Date: March 23, 2021
To: The Honorable Chair Gelser
The Honorable Vice-Chair Anderson
Members of the Committee
From: David Westbrook
Lines for Life
RE: Testimony on SB 680 – Peer respite centers

Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Anderson and Members of the Committee,

My name is David Westbrook, and I am the Chief Operating Officer at Lines for Life where our mission is preventing substance abuse and suicide and promoting mental wellness.

In 2020 we answered over 145,000 calls across 30 plus lines. The needs of callers are many and varied and we are constantly helping callers consider their options. Of the people who call us a tiny fraction need hospitalization. The majority we can help deescalate out of a crisis state. Between hospitalization and de-escalation, however; the options are far fewer than we would hope.

In over a dozen other states around the country peer crisis respite would be an option for part of the solution. These services which are trauma informed, compassionate, and evidence based need to be an option here in Oregon. This is why Lines for Life is supporting Senate Bill 680.

While we may wish that Peer respite services were already an easily available option, the truth is that now is an excellent time to be getting these into place. As many, if not all of you know, Oregon along with the rest of the country is preparing for 988. 988 is a three-digit number as easily remembered by people in behavioral crisis as 911 is for people in physical crisis. In the best case scenario, the 988 system will have three components; a call center hub that operates as a care traffic control dealing with immediate needs of individuals, mobile crisis that

will be able to quickly reach those in need with teams of behavioral health specialists, and crisis respite centers. In Lines for Life, Oregon has a statewide crisis call center, but for 988 to be effective we need to bolster our mobile crisis outreach, and we need to immediately begin building capacity for those individuals who need a place to be safe while in crisis. This is where peer respite services come in. They can play a major role in keeping individuals out of high-cost settings like hospitals while providing services that are culturally relevant, person-centered, trauma informed and proven to be effective.

I hope that you will join Lines for Life in promoting mental wellness for all Oregonians by supporting SB 680.

Respectfully,



David Westbrook