



TO: Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Anderson, & Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery

FROM: Disability Rights Oregon (DRO)

DATE: March 23, 2021

RE: DRO 's Testimony in Support of SB 680

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) submits this testimony in support of HB 3229.

Disability Rights Oregon, through its Mental Health Rights Project, works to end the criminalization of mental illness, promote independence and community living for people with mental health conditions, and improve conditions in Oregon jails and prisons for people in mental health crisis. The development of expanded community resources for people with mental illness is crucial to this mission, as having access to services within their community can prevent people from spiraling further into crisis that can result in further trauma, hospitalization, and law enforcement involvement. Too often when other resources are unavailable, the criminal justice system becomes the recourse for dealing with people with mental illness who are in distress, often with detrimental results. By providing venues for short term stabilization and peer support, we can keep people from entering the cycles of crisis, arrest, and incarceration from which it can be incredibly difficult for them to break free.

SB 680 will fund the creation of three peer respite centers across Oregon, capable of providing support to people living with mental illness who are in immediate distress. These centers would allow people in distress to engage with others who know what they are going through in safe and welcoming settings, while freeing up vital emergency medical and law enforcement resources for tasks to which they are better suited. Disability Rights Oregon supports SB 680 as an important investment in community mental health resources and a necessary step in the building of a humane, trauma-informed system for dealing with mental health crisis.

If you have any questions regarding DRO's position on HB 3229 please contact Meghan Moyer at 503-432-5777.