

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 755. My name is Laura Johnson, and I am Director of Program Development at Sponsors, a reentry program based in Lane County.

Throughout my years as a direct service provider and program director, I have witnessed and supported hundreds of individuals struggling to break free from addiction. Measure 110 is a critically important step in supporting people, families and communities to address and heal what has become an urgent health crisis in Oregon.

People can and do recover from substance use disorder. It is a treatable disease. While it can be devastating and almost certainly leaves scars in its wake, people and families can and do heal. I see it every day in my work at Sponsors. I also have loved ones who have broken free and are gratefully living vibrant and healthy lives today. But, as with any disease, healing requires treatment. It requires the support of knowledgeable and compassionate professionals. It also requires perseverance. Like treating any other persistent health issue, sometimes it takes more than one round of intervention to achieve lasting results. But treatment can and does work.

SB 755 is a critical step in ensuring consistent and equitable access to this life-saving treatment. We have watched the number of overdoses among Oregonians increase exponentially over the past year. People and families are despairing, and they cannot afford to wait for help. Delaying funding for much-needed treatment will prolong historical racial inequities exacerbated by our criminal legal system, and deepen existing disparities in our health care services. We have an opportunity before us. We have a chance to invest available resources in a way that will not only help people and communities to heal but also improve opportunity for growth and prosperity.

The people of Oregon raised their voices and votes to pass ballot Measure 110 did so because they have witnessed the devastation wrecked by untreated addiction. They see the ways that punishing people who are suffering has deepened racial and social inequities, and compounded the harms exacted on marginalized communities. If we fail to fully fund treatment services, we are knowingly prolonging that harm. We must act now to fully fund the Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act. Thank you for your time and for thoughtfully considering the testimony you hear today and the importance of the bill before you.

Sincerely,

Laura Johnson
Sponsors