

Dear Chair Prozanski and members of the committee,

My name is Tera Hurst; I am submitting testimony in support of SB 755 on behalf of the Oregon Health Justice Recovery Alliance. I am the Executive Director of the Health Justice Recovery Alliance and a person in long term recovery. The Alliance represents more than 75 community-based organizations across the state with deep knowledge and experience working to serve and strengthen local communities. Members include medical associations, culturally-specific organizations, labor, harm reduction and addiction recovery providers, advocates and people in recovery.

Our work is centered on the implementation of the Drug Addiction Treatment & Recovery Act. We're focused on investing in the communities most harmed by the War on Drugs — Black, Latinx, Native, Indigenous, and tribal communities. People of color and low-income Oregonians continue to be disproportionately harmed by Oregon's failed approach to addiction; they are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and underrepresented in the healthcare system.

Oregon was already in the midst of an addiction crisis, with one to two Oregonians dying from a drug overdose every day¹, and one in 10 Oregonians struggling with Substance Use Disorder.² **The pandemic is making this crisis worse, and we can't afford to wait. We must act now.** Data from the Oregon Health Authority shows that drug overdose deaths in Oregon were up 70 percent during the spring of 2020 compared to the spring of 2019.³ We don't have the luxury of waiting to create a perfect system when so many people are in desperate need for services right now, and overdose deaths are skyrocketing. But we can work together to help people in crisis now, while also doing the work to lay the foundation for a program that is sustainable and effective.

Before COVID our state ranked nearly *last* in the nation when it comes to providing addiction recovery services.⁴ Wait lists to access services were typically weeks or even months long. It was an already dire situation that COVID is exacerbating. The Alliance is here to help create a well thought out program that implements 110 as voters intended, and takes into account the many complexities of addiction medicine and behavioral health care. But **we also need to help people now. The longer we wait, the more loved ones we lose to this crisis.**

When it comes to the recovery services needed to help people struggling with addiction, we *know* what we need to invest in, and where the most urgent need exists. Measure 110 was intended to fund critical recovery services that already exist, but are underfunded, and to expand housing assistance, peer support and harm reduction services.

We do not need to create something new from scratch. Right now, the recovery services we need to invest in exist -- they just need more funding so that they can meet the demand.

¹ [OHA](#)

² [SAMHSA](#)

³ [OHA Press Release, 10/28/2020](#)

⁴ [SAMHSA](#)

We cannot afford to wait to create “the perfect strategic plan” before funding services. We will lose capacity in the existing treatment and recovery system, and we will lose critical frontline staff due to layoffs. We already are. And more loved ones and community members will be lost to accidental drug overdose, the leading cause of death in the United States for those under 50.

We celebrate the passage of the law and the incredible work done thus far. The next — and most immediate step — is to pass SB 755 so that we can begin to address the tremendous need in our communities for increased access to addiction recovery services.

Sincerely,

Tera Hurst
Executive Director
Oregon Health Justice Recovery Alliance