

Submitter: Robert Nikkel  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care  
Measure: SB432

Dear Chair Patterson and Members of the Committee,  
As a former state mental health and addictions director I am writing in support of Senate Bill 432-1.

Early in the 1990s when I started my over two decades of service to the State of Oregon

I was able to work with the Oregon Consumer Technical Assistance (OCTA) which in many ways is the model upon which the community-based consumer-run technical assistance center is proposed in SB 432-1. OCTA trained and educated consumers of public behavioral health services on the technical aspects of service systems and policy. SB 432-1 will expand consumer engagement and equitable participation in behavioral health services planning and policy development.

Since the early 1990 more peer-run organizations have been created and this bill will add resources to improve their services and supports. These organizations are often in need of guidance on how governmental processes work as well as how to find and work effectively with other funding sources

Because the center staff will be led and staffed by individuals who have accessed behavioral health services, they are especially credible, leveraging their insights into accommodations and strategies that helped them achieve recovery. It will develop skills

in advocacy and self-advocacy while coping with their own disabilities, trauma challenges, discrimination and stigma, and other diversity and inclusion hindrances.

In addition the center will offer ongoing recruitment, training, mentoring, and information to those who are interested but do not yet know how to better understand the jargon, acronyms, and how our services are organized before they take the next steps.

Based on my many years of leadership in state government in which I created the Consumer Advisory Council, a consumer presence in Oregon State Hospital and a consumer led self-help organization for people with co-occurring challenges of mental health and substance use, I believe that it is crucial to hear from the people who have experience in developing their own supports as well as using a variety of public services. These individuals will include those with diverse backgrounds such as being

formerly incarcerated, of different ages, and from BIPOC communities. Many will also be people with dual diagnoses, veterans, those from the LGBTQ2S+ community, and all parts of this state.

Thank you for supporting this piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Robert Nikkel, MSW