

**MHAAO IS AN INCLUSIVE PEER-RUN
ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO SELF-DIRECTION
HONORING THE VOICE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE.**



March 1, 2023

The Hon. Deb Patterson
The Hon. Cedric Hayden
Members of the Committee
Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Senate Bill 432.1 - Support

Dear Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden, and Members of the Senate Health Committee,

As members of the behavioral health workforce, we are writing to express our support for Senate Bill 432.1, which seeks to expand consumer engagement and equitable participation in behavioral health services planning and policy development. This legislation is crucial in improving the quality and accessibility of behavioral health services for individuals across Oregon. It is critically important that consumers have the opportunity to participate in planning and development activities for services that impact their lives.

With nearly 100 years of collective experience in behavioral health, we write on behalf of Mental Health & Addictions Association of Oregon (MHAAO), a peer-run, community-based non-profit. Peer-run organizations like MHAAO play an important role in supporting individuals with behavioral health needs. SB 432.1 will add resources to improve services and supports for peer-run organizations like MHAAO, thus enabling us to better serve our communities.

We have been privileged to have had the opportunity to work with a consumer-run national technical assistance center, as well as serve as technical assistance providers ourselves. Firsthand, we have seen how a technical assistance (TA) center can positively impact services, systems, and lives. As proposed in SB 432.1, the TA center will increase consumer engagement and equitable participation in behavioral health services planning and policy development. It is key that the voices and perspectives of individuals accessing behavioral health services across our state are incorporated into decision-making processes.

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In addition to increasing engagement and equitable participation, the TA center will play a valuable role in supporting consumers to develop skills in advocacy, self-advocacy, system navigation and other skills necessary to engage meaningfully in service planning and policy. Led and staffed by individuals who themselves have lived experience with accessing behavioral health services, the TA center will be uniquely poised to ensure individuals with lived experience are at the forefront of service planning and provision.

Over a quarter of a million Oregonians are public behavioral health service consumers. The TA center will provide crucial input and feedback from individuals who have experience in developing their own supports as well as using a variety of public services. This will help ensure that services are responsive to the needs of individuals and are tailored to their unique circumstances.

SB 432.1 seeks to include individuals with diverse backgrounds such as being formerly incarcerated, of different ages, and from BIPOC communities, as well as those with dual diagnoses, Veterans, and those from the LGBTQ2S+ community. This will ensure that all individuals have a seat at the table and their perspectives are valued.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 432.1 is a critical piece of legislation that will improve the quality and accessibility of behavioral health services for individuals across Oregon. We urge you to support this bill and ensure that all individuals have access to the resources they need to achieve recovery and resilience.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter that has the potential to result in significant behavioral health service improvements statewide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Janie Gullickson'.

Janie Gullickson
Executive Director, MHAAO

And Director members of the MHAAO Leadership Team:
*Reina Bower, Tristin Denney, Tonya Jones
Terry Leckron-Myers, Rachelle Ross-Schank, Adrienne Scavera*