



Oregon Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

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March 3, 2023

The Honorable Janelle Bynum
Chair
House Committee on Economic Development & Small Business
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2976

Chair Bynum and Members of the House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business:

On behalf of the Oregon Society of Addiction Medicine (ORSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Oregon specializing in the prevention and treatment of addiction, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important topic. We write today to express our opposition to HB 2976. We believe that Oregon should not use public funds to promote alcohol consumption.

Alcohol causes many medical and mental health problems in the United States, and especially in Oregon. According to the Oregon Health Authority, "Excessive alcohol use remains the third leading cause of preventable death among Oregonians and is responsible for over 2,000 deaths annually. Diseases related to excessive alcohol use and misuse include cancer, liver disease, diabetes, and alcohol dependence. Related injuries include those from motor vehicle crashes and violence.

Excessive alcohol use has serious consequences for public health. It can lead to significant problems including liver disease, diabetes, cancer, alcohol dependence and injuries from motor vehicle crashes and violence. Conversely, consuming less alcohol lowers a person's risk for injuries and for developing a chronic disease. Drinking less alcohol also helps people manage existing chronic diseases, including liver disease, cancers and alcohol dependence." ⁱ

Treatment for Substance Use Disorders (SUD) is very hard to access in Oregon. Based on the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2019 Oregon ranked 48th among states for access to Addiction Medicine treatment. But by 2021, we had slipped into last place. We have a strong, dedicated workforce but lack the infrastructure and workforce development to meet Oregonians' needs. Timing is incredibly important when someone decides to make changes to their drug or alcohol use, and in many areas of Oregon, we see patients waiting 1-3 months to access acute withdrawal management or inpatient medical care.

Many people consume alcohol occasionally, responsibly, and at levels that do not cause them significant harm. However, Oregon as a whole needs to reduce harmful drinking and the development of Alcohol Use Disorder as evidenced by how we compare with other states:

- Binge drinking among young adults, ages 18-25 years - 38.9% in 2017-2019, which

- exceeds the regional average of 35%ⁱⁱ
- Alcohol use disorder among young adults in Oregon – 12.6% in 2017-2019, which exceeds the national average of 9.8%ⁱⁱⁱ
- 5th among states for Alcohol Use Disorder prevalence in teens and adults – 12.3%^{iv}

Alcohol negatively impacts mental health and is associated with depression, anxiety, and suicide. Oregon ranks among all states in our country:

- 2nd for any mental illness in the past year – 27.3%
- 3rd for serious mental illness in the past year – 7.15%
- 2nd for serious thoughts of suicide in the past year – 6.8%
- 5th for major depressive disorder in the past year – 9.8%

Researchers studied suicides and found that even those without chronic alcohol problems were at increased risk of having consumed alcohol just prior to death. The risks were as follows:

- 1.8-fold risk for males
- 2.4-fold risk for females.^v

Alcohol costs Oregon not only in terms of human suffering, but also economically. In 2019:

- Labor productivity losses: \$2.19 billion
- Criminal Justice and Motor Vehicle Collisions: \$1.3 billion
- Health care: \$702.6 million
- Education and Social Welfare: \$605.5 million
- The total of all alcohol-related costs in 2019 was approximately 2% of the gross state product.^{vi}

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective and to oppose this legislation given the important public health impacts it has. It would be wonderful to see the alcohol tax funds redirected toward developing a rapid intake system for acute alcohol withdrawal management and inpatient treatment. Our state could also use funds to teach Oregonians what binge drinking is, and how to recognize early signs of Alcohol Use Disorder development.

Please do not hesitate to contact Eowyn Rieke at eowyn.rieke@gmail.com if our organization can provide assistance in the future.

Sincerely,



Eowyn Rieke, MD, FASAM
President, Oregon Society of Addiction Medicine



Moxie Loeffler, DO, MPH, FASAM
Policy Chair and Past President, Oregon Society of Addiction Medicine

CC: The Honorable Lily Morgan
The Honorable Daniel Nguyen

The Honorable Ed Diehl
The Honorable Lucetta Elmer
The Honorable Cyrus Javadi
The Honorable John Lively
The Honorable Virgle Osborne
The Honorable Hai Pham
The Honorable Ricki Ruiz
The Honorable Jules Walters

ⁱ Oregon Health Authority. Excessive Alcohol Use. Available online – [cited 3/2/23] - <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/excessivealcoholuse/pages/index.aspx>

ⁱⁱ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Behavioral Health Barometer: Oregon, Volume 6: Indicators as measured through the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health and the National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services. HHS Publication No. SMA–20–Baro–19–OR. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Behavioral Health Barometer: Oregon, Volume 6: Indicators as measured through the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health and the National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services. HHS Publication No. SMA–20–Baro–19–OR. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020.

^{iv} MHACBO. Oregon Data extracted from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2019 and 2021 reports. Available online: [3/2/23] https://mhacbo.org/media/filer_public/3e/bf/3ebf8e97-83b3-42fa-ba1d-a8e06967d830/2019_epidemiologyweb.pdf

^v Kaplan MS, Hugué N, McFarland BH, Caetano R, Conner KR, Giesbrecht N, Nolte KB. Use of alcohol before suicide in the United States. *Ann Epidemiol.* 2014 Aug;24(8):588-592.e1-2. doi: 10.1016/j.annepidem.2014.05.008. Epub 2014 May 23. PMID: 24953567; PMCID: PMC4119510.

^{vi} ECONorthwest. Alcohol Harms and Economic Burden – Interim Report. January 20, 2021. Available online: [cited 3/2/23] – 2019 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/597fb96acd39c34098e8d423/t/62a26962b665c727f813717f/1654810983543/OHA+Alcohol+Harms+Interim+Report_FINAL.pdf
2021-- https://mhacbo.org/media/2021_epidemiology.pdf