



March 9, 2023

House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and members of the committee:

The Pacific Communities Health District (District) wholeheartedly supports the passage of House Bill 2544 to help increase statewide capacity of licensed residential facilities serving individuals with substance use disorders.

Substance use disorder has become a national public health crisis and Lincoln County has been increasingly impacted. Substance use disorder can lead to teen pregnancy, transmission of infection such as HIV, houselessness, and chronic conditions resulting from neglect of basic needs. A recent rash of fentanyl overdoses, in some cases fatal overdoses, has added a new level of urgency to this crisis.

Data gathered by our Regional Mental Health/Substance Use Coalition (Coalition) shows that between 9/1/19 and 8/31/21, 1933 Lincoln County residents were diagnosed with substance use disorder. That is 4.5% of the adult population. In 2022, 89 patients were treated in Lincoln County hospitals for accidental overdoses. In 2021, there were 11 overdose fatalities in the county and in just the first two quarters of 2022, there were 10 fatalities. Oregon Health Authority reports that in 2022, there were 391 overdose fatalities statewide. In addition to the cost in human potential and human life, according to surgeongeneral.gov, "Substance misuse is estimated to cost society \$442 billion each year in health care costs, lost productivity, and criminal justice costs."

The Coalition is made up of community partners, including the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Lincoln County Health and Human Services and Sheriff's Office, Samaritan Health Services, mental health and substance use disorder service providers and others who identify gaps in services and help to implement solutions. The lack of local residential recovery services is an identified gap.

As a rural county along Oregon's central coast, the nearest residential facility is 50 miles from the county seat. Further exacerbating access, that facility often has a long waiting list, causing many residents to travel up to 300 miles for treatment. One local parent shared that his 18-year-old son developed an alcohol use disorder during the COVID school closures. He was willing to enter treatment until he learned he would have to travel to Baker City, almost seven hours away. He felt it was too far from home and refused to go. That window of willingness closed, and he continued to struggle. Another parent said she made the 600-mile roundtrip every weekend to attend family

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visits when her daughter was in treatment. This was a significant hardship, but she was grateful she was able to make the trip; not all families have the resources to support their loved ones when they are so far from home.

To help alleviate this public health crisis and mitigate this identified gap, the District purchased a former adult foster care facility in Newport to convert into a 16-bed evidence-based residential and outpatient substance use disorder recovery center for adults (18+). The facility requires a significant remodel as well as an 8000-square-foot addition; and the District has committed additional funding towards that effort. Total cost of the project is estimated at \$10,093,170.

In addition to helping us design a facility that will meet the needs of our diverse population, community partners have so far contributed more than half of the needed funding. Financial partners joining the District in this effort include the United States Government; InterCommunity Health Network – Coordinated Care Organization; Lincoln County; Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; North Lincoln Health District; the Cities of Newport, Waldport and Toledo; and private foundations, businesses and individuals. New funding partners are identified and approached on an ongoing basis. In addition, Samaritan Health Services has committed to staffing, operating and maintaining the facility as a part of its operating agreement with the District.

Our community has identified this need and stepped up to help alleviate the tremendous suffering caused by substance use disorder and our lack of residential recovery services. While we recognize and support the investments made by the legislature in 2021 for mental health residential facilities, we were disappointed that substance use disorder residential facilities did not qualify for funding. As a community, we strongly urge the passage of House Bill 2544 to help finalize the funding needed for this important project as well as provide support for other substance use disorder residential facilities throughout the state.

Thank you for your urgent consideration.

Sincerely,



Aimee Thompson, Chair
Pacific Communities Health District
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The Pacific Communities Health District is a political subdivision of the State of Oregon under Chapter 440, Oregon Revised Statutes, created to support health care services for residents and visitors.