



March 13, 2023

TO: Chair Nosse, members of the House Committee On Behavioral Health & Health Care

FROM: Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Jessica Pratt

RE: Support HB 2544

Dear Chair Nosse and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties, representing Oregon's county governments, I am writing to you today to urge your support for House Bill 2544 to increase statewide capacity of licensed residential facilities serving individuals with substance use disorders or mental health concerns. The Legislature in 2021 made a timely investment to begin that work, and a similar investment is needed now.

On the addictions side, Ballot Measure 110 is funding community outreach to individuals experiencing problem substance use. Part of that outreach includes walking alongside people until they reach the point of wanting to engage in addiction treatment and then helping them connect to services. Right now, when a person reaches that critical point of readiness to engage, they encounter long wait lists for residential treatment. Oregon is currently ranked 50th in the nation for access to addiction treatment.

At the same time, the number of people being court-ordered to aid and assist restoration services is unmanageable, both at the Oregon State Hospital and in the community, resulting in federal lawsuits and exposing counties and providers to growing liability risk. There are not enough spaces available to meet the demand just for court-ordered community treatment. Now because of the Mosman order limiting length of stay in the Oregon State Hospital, individuals are being discharged from the Oregon State Hospital still in the midst of a mental health crisis, often with no appropriate community placements to receive them.

This shortage of residential treatment and supported housing capacity imperils individuals in crisis and creates an untenable risk of lawsuits to the state, counties and treatment providers.

AOC urges your support for HB 2544 and we thank you for your support for state-county shared services.

Jessica Pratt  
Legislative Affairs Manager  
Association of Oregon Counties