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House Committee On Rules
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 3610 - Relating to Alcohol and Establishing a Task Force

Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, Vice-Chair Kropf, and Members of the Committee,

As a Multnomah County Commissioner, practicing emergency physician and volunteer providing medical care to people living outside, I am pleased to submit this letter in strong support of HB 3610.

Fittingly, April is Alcohol Awareness Month. There are thousands of statistics I could focus on to demonstrate the alcohol crisis that affects every corner of our state. I could share that per the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), excessive alcohol use is the third-leading preventable cause of death and disease in Oregon, or that per ECONorthwest's report to the OHA, excessive alcohol use cost the state \$4.8 billion in 2019, including \$2.19 billion in lost labor productivity, or that Oregon ranks 50th—*last*—in access to treatment and alcohol kills 6 Oregonians a day. While these statistics are powerful, I want to describe my firsthand experiences as a physician serving on the front line of our healthcare system.

When we talk about addiction in our communities, we often think of methamphetamines or fentanyl. We rarely talk about alcohol, and when we do, it is not with the same level of urgency or concern. But the impact of alcohol addiction is what we see every day in the ER. Whether it's a teenager dropped off by their friend with alcohol poisoning, a grandmother who is fluorescent yellow from end stage liver disease with a belly so swollen with fluid that she can't breathe, a homeless individual being brought in by EMS for acute alcohol intoxication being found down, or the countless community members in despair having lost their jobs, social networks, or homes due to their addiction, alcohol causes unparalleled harm to Oregonians.

Just as emergency physicians serve on the front line of our healthcare system, counties are on the front line of implementing policy as the Local Mental Health Authority and Local Public Health Authority. While meth and fentanyl are acutely devastating our communities, the ongoing impacts of alcohol reverberate throughout all our systems- health, corrections, homelessness, domestic violence, human services, disability services.



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While alcohol used in moderation is not at issue, alcohol use disorder causes immeasurable harm and billions of dollars in financial costs to our communities. As a doctor working on the front line, and as a commissioner representing the largest Local Public Health Authority in the state, I urge you to focus on the health and lives of Oregonians and begin to tackle one of the biggest issues in our state through reasoned approaches to addressing alcohol use. I urge you to support HB 3610.