



February 12, 2024

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

I am writing on behalf of Oregon Council for Behavioral Health. OCBH is the statewide association of primarily nonprofit providers that deliver treatment for individuals with substance use disorders and mental illness. Our member organizations serve individuals living with the chronic diseases of addiction and mental illness. It is likely the behavioral health providers in your districts are members of OCBH. We would like to express our support for SB 1594-1 to establish a task force on safety in behavioral health settings and to provide an initial grant to allow for investments in safety.

Our sector routinely responds to calls from the legislature and from their communities to ensure Oregon's individuals in behavioral health crisis have access to care. However, our system routinely lacks access to the most appropriate level of care and our providers are seeing unprecedented levels of acuity among the patients we serve. As a result, our workforce is being asked to treat people in settings that were not designed to serve them.

We must provide an environment in which our workforce feels safe. This requires investments in additional staffing, technology, and infrastructure changes. We stand ready to develop these recommendations alongside our labor partners.

We urge your support of SB 1594-1.

Thank you,

Heather Jefferis  
Executive Director, OCBH