

Testimony in Support of Oregon Senate Bill 1547

Opening:

Honorable committee members, I am testifying today because I believe SB 1547 offers support our youth desperately need. The lack of options and support for youth leaves families feeling helpless, and our state remains ill-equipped to address the growing crisis.

I am a person in long-term recovery for 28 years, the leader and advocate of a substance use prevention organization, where I work with 200+ students. I am also one of the founders of Oregon's first recovery high school.

I speak to youth and families every week who are desperate for support, and sadly, the situation continues to worsen with the severity of the substances in Oregon.

This unique perspective allows me to see firsthand the dire need for Senate Bill 1547 and its focus on supporting our youth struggling with substance use and mental health concerns.

Oregon's Crisis:

We cannot ignore our state's harsh reality: Oregon holds the dubious distinction of the second-highest drug and alcohol misuse rates in the nation, coupled with the **worst** access to treatment services, ranking a shameful 50th. Even more alarming is our youth's situation, which is even more desperate and dire when it comes to needing and finding support. Families I encounter beg for support, while the current policies fail to grasp the intricacies of addiction, especially among young people.

Immediate and Efficient Help:

This proposed bill offers a lifeline to our current broken system of support for youth. The proposed **immediate and efficient access to virtual support through 988** is crucial for youth who are often hesitant to seek help due to stigma and accessibility barriers or, based on the brain science of addiction, do not realize they need help. And with the substances in our communities being as harmful and deadly as they are, immediate access to support is vital.

Empowering Parents:

This bill recognizes the vital role parents play in their children's well-being. Granting them the ability to **compel their child to treatment** offers a critical intervention pathway when timely action is crucial. While necessary in extreme cases, law

enforcement was a tool parents used, and perhaps not ideal, it allowed a path to support. This bill provides a much-needed alternative that addresses some of the fixes needed to support our youth.

Addressing the Cannabis Reality:

To continue ignoring the impact of cannabis on youth is not only irresponsible, but it continues to place youth on a path to life-altering consequences. We cannot cling to outdated standards that fail to acknowledge the addictive potential of certain substances, including cannabis. Recognizing this reality in the bill and allowing **health insurance coverage for cannabis addiction treatment** are essential steps toward practical solutions.

Time for Action:

The current system is broken. And this bill isn't just a step forward; it's a leap toward rescuing our youth and investing in their future. I urge you to **support this bill**. It offers immediate help, empowers families, and acknowledges the realities of substances and addiction in today's Oregon. Let's give our youth the chance they deserve to overcome and heal from substances and build a brighter future.

Closing:

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am available to answer any questions you may have.