

March 12, 2025

Dear Senator Prozanski, Representative Kropf, and the Members of the Committee:

My name is Sharon Dursi Martin. I'm the founding principal of Oregon's first recovery high school: Harmony Academy. I've been a public school educator since 2002. I serve on the state Recovery School Advisory Council and the Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission's Recovery Committee. I'm also Vice Chair of the National Association of Recovery Schools.

If you sense a theme there—I love recovery and education.

I want to thank all the adolescents who spoke this evening to the need for recovery schools and a continuum of care for the peers they know and the ones they will never know across the state.

This is an emergency.

Since Harmony opened in 2019, we've celebrated **226 kids** who have had the courage to stop treating their trauma with substances—to find community, strength, power, and healing. These youth often go from being frightened loners, to leaders and life-savers.

Since 2019, Harmony grew from 11 kids to our enrollment cap of 44 last year--so we opened a fourth classroom. We can now serve up to 60. We've sustained our program through cross-sector partnerships, creativity, and belief in young people as experts in their own lives.

We outreach to youth who choose recovery, largely students with complex needs. We reach out to places where decisions are made about youth where, as Kaleb said, they can "fall through cracks the size of potholes." We work to prevent or reverse inequities in our systems. Currently, 45% of Harmony students are youth of color. 58% have disabilities beyond SUD. We don't require treatment. We provide transportation across the tri-county area. Yet, even with ODE funding through HB 2767, this year we had to make up for a roughly million dollar shortfall through competitive grants.

I dream of the day when all adolescents who choose recovery can access treatment, community, and a free and appropriate public education, finding the systems ready for them when they take the first step.

Longitudinal studies show that recovery schools save communities sixteen to fifty-two thousand dollars per student. That means that every dollar we spend can come back to our communities sevenfold. When we invest in hope and evidence based practices, we stop investing for emergency room visits, arrests, hospitalization for suicide attempts, despair.

Youth at recovery schools reduce or stop their use and show up for themselves and others. They are less likely to engage in illegal activities and report a greater satisfaction in life. They are also able to save other youths' lives. They hit milestones. They graduate.

Every year we celebrate a graduating class. Our students give speeches and share their experience strength and hope.

Our youth know many others who die before finding recovery.

HB 2767 passed in 2023 promising Oregonians nine recovery schools by 2029.

As a recovery school leader I have met with brilliant, heart-led, and powerful leaders from Southern Oregon, Lane County, Eastern Oregon and the Coast who are energized, mobilized, and prepared to open new recovery schools. They are poised to save lives in rural and tribal areas, down the I5 corridor, in metro and coastal communities.

The Governor's Recommended Budget will close the doors on these schools before they open.

2502 is some hope to keep that momentum going.

There are 38,000 youth in Oregon who suffer from substance use disorder. Most will not receive treatment.

The problem is not getting smaller.

We have solutions.

Let's not pull the safety net away when there are so many adolescent lives in the air.

Thank you,

Sharon Dursi Martin