

Submitter: Jonah Otis

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3321

Dear Co-Chairs Prozanski and Kropf, Members of the Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response,

My name is Jonah Otis, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2502, HB 3321, and HB 3375. I have witnessed firsthand the urgent need for stronger primary prevention programs and expanded services to protect Oregon's youth from substance use and addiction.

My son is a sophomore at Rivercrest High School in Portland, one of very few recovery high schools in Oregon. After my son's depression and mental health issues drove him to self-medicate with alcohol, cannabis, and more; I watched him go from a top student in middle school with interest in science and aviation, to a high schooler filled with darkness and sadness that resulted in alcohol poisoning, cutting and self harm, and ultimately suicide attempts.

I sought every possible route to recovery available: counseling, virtual Intensive Outpatient (IOP), anti-depressants, and ultimately 45 days in a rehab facility in California (because Oregon doesn't have enough resources). When school started again last September, I braced myself for another tumultuous school year. One would assume being in an affluent suburban high school (Sunset High in Beaverton), my son would have resources and avenues to stay safe. Instead, he was offered drugs by other students, saw students using drugs in bathrooms, and had limited time with counselors.

Then came Rivercrest High School. Having a learning environment tailored to the needs of a teen in recovery, staffed by people with the lived experience and expertise, has proven to be a lifesaver - literally. What I have witnessed at Rivercrest is evidence that recovery high schools work, and they keep youth safe and on a real, effective path to recovery. Today my son is finally thriving; not just surviving, but thriving! He's a successful student and has been safe and sober for nearly the entire school year. I drove hours every day to bring him to and from Rivercrest because it's worth it. I assure you as a tax-paying citizen of Oregon, the investment in recovery high schools and youth prevention strategy is worth every penny.

I appreciate the efforts to prioritize prevention and intervention strategies, particularly through:

HB 3321, which advances the development and implementation of a statewide

primary prevention strategy.

HB 3375 and HB 2502, which ensure a comprehensive approach to youth substance use prevention, screening, intervention, and treatment, as well as support for recovery high schools.

HB 2502, HB 3321, and HB 3375, which enhance the Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission's role in youth-focused prevention and establish clear, consistent reporting on outcomes.

If these bills are merged, I respectfully urge the Committee to:

Maintain a strong definition of primary prevention and ensure a clear, strategic approach is not diluted.

Require explicit youth-focused and primary prevention reporting as a distinct pillar within HB 2929.

Thank you for your leadership on these critical issues. Supporting these measures safeguards Oregon's youth, strengthens families, and promotes healthier communities. I appreciate your time and consideration and respectfully request a "Do Pass" and "Yes" vote on these bills.

Sincerely,
Jonah Otis
Portland, OR