

To: Sen. Kate Lieber, Co-Chair, Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Rep. Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair, Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Cc: Senator Janeen Sollman, Co-Chair, Subcommittee On Education
Representative Ricki Ruiz, Co-Chair, Subcommittee On Education
Senator Lew Frederick
Senator Suzanne Weber
Representative Susan McLain
Representative Hoa Nguyen
Representative Boomer Wright
Representative Dwayne Yunker

Re: SB 5515, Oregon Department of Education, Recovery Schools Funding

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez; Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz; and members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education:

My name is Amy Donohue, the parent of a student at Rivercrest Academy, a recovery high school in Portland. **I am writing in strong support of funding ODE's recovery high schools in the 2025-27 biennium, at the full \$12.7 million requested by the agency.**

Although we no longer live in the dark shadow of Measure 110, our youth were deeply affected by the permissive attitude toward and ease of access to illegal substances. Our daughter fell into a friend group who pulled her deep into drug use. Her bright personality and physical health descended into a dark place and our family fell into the empty landscape of teen substance abuse treatment in Oregon - a lack of which has devastated the lives of so many young people and families across our State, with many having to seek treatment in California or elsewhere, if they can afford it.

Our daughter is a success story thanks to Harmony and Rivercrest Academies - the recovery high schools available to her. With the support of peers, teachers and counselors, she has been drug free for 18 months. It is a gross understatement to say that seeing our child find this support was an incredible relief. She is thriving and will graduate this spring, on time and with her future looking much brighter.

If we are not going to fund substance abuse prevention and treatment in our State, we MUST support youth and their families with publicly funded recovery high schools. As substance use disorder (SUD) rates in youth and young adults in Oregon continue to outpace the national average, it is more important now than ever before that we commit to providing the necessary resources for young Oregonians to be successful. These are highly effective schools designed specifically for students with a substance use disorder who are actively in recovery. Research has shown that students at recovery high schools have higher attendance rates, higher graduation rates, better learning outcomes and better quality of life.

In 2023, the Legislature passed **HB 2767**, which committed the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to both supporting existing recovery schools, and growing access to recovery schools across the state – onboarding three schools each biennium until we have a total of nine schools across the state.

Three recovery high schools are already operating in Oregon thanks to funding from HB 2767, and three new schools are ready to open their doors in rural and coastal parts of the state.

ODE requested **\$12.7 million** as the amount necessary to sustain the three existing schools in the Willamette Valley, and open three new ones in rural and coastal parts of the state. The Governor's Recommended Budget cut that amount in half, which is not enough money to expand recovery schools at all, and limits the enrollment capacity at the existing schools. This cut is unacceptable.

\$12.7 million is a drop in the bucket for the state's education budget, but it could mean the difference between life and death for youth with SUD. We **urge your support for these critical services** and ask that you fund ODE's recovery school budget request at its full capacity.

Sincerely,

Amy Donohue
Mother, Wife, Architect, Voter