

Submitter: Saren craig  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB989

Hello Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services,

My name is Saren Craig, MA, LPC, and I am writing in opposition to SB 989.

This bill raises serious concerns about the potential for young people to be institutionalized against their will, particularly for issues related to identity, mental health, or substance use. While the intent may be to address crises facing Oregon's youth, removing consent from the equation is a dangerous step.

Youth deserve to be partners in their own care. The most effective drug treatment models are built on voluntary engagement and the development of trust—not coercion. Forcing youth into care they do not agree to often leads to long-term harm, especially when treatment settings are not equipped to support the complexities of identity development, trauma, or cultural context.

There is no guarantee that a facility chosen for involuntary placement will be affirming, safe, or even competent in addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ youth or BIPOC youths. These young people are already overrepresented in systems of control and too often misdiagnosed or pathologized for simply expressing who they truly are.

SB 989 would divert critical funding away from community-based, trauma-informed, culturally competent, and identity-affirming mental health care that young people actually need and are asking for. Instead of expanding involuntary systems, we should be investing in care models that prioritize autonomy, safety, and consent—such as peer support, housing access, and affirming providers. Forcing youth into institutional settings will not solve the problem. It will deepen it.

This bill does not protect vulnerable youth—it puts them at greater risk. I urge you to vote no on SB 989 and instead support models that center consent, autonomy, and dignity in care.

I oppose SB 989.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Saren Craig, MA, LPC