

To the Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety:

I am grateful that you have taken up HB 3197 for consideration. I am a counselor in the field of addiction medicine, currently serving as the program manager of a new residential treatment facility in Portland. I am in my 17th year as a practitioner, with experience in a wide variety of treatment settings and host environments. I have accompanied thousands of individuals on their recovery journey and come to appreciate the courage and commitment exhibited by my clients, as well as the many providers who serve alongside me in this field.

HB 3197 is a necessary upgrade to our treatment, public health, and prevention continuum of services. Beyond providing financial resources for those services, it also institutes much-needed regulation on an industry that - intentionally or not - contributes to the physical and social harms we as Oregonians must bear in the form of broken families, absent employees, and chronically ill patients.

By gradually raising taxes on the most purchased alcoholic beverages - cider, beer, and wine - HB 3197 creates the conditions for people purchasing alcohol in Oregon to consider their options more intentionally. Raising the retail expense of purchase will reduce the amount of binge drinking (drinking four or more drinks in a 24-hour period) by underage youth who are less able to afford the increased cost. It will disincentivize heavy drinkers (approximately 6% of the US population) by increasing the financial cost of their habit. Most importantly, it will provide incentives for our alcohol producers and retailers to provide a wider variety of quality non-alcoholic beverages as well as gathering places that are alcohol optional. The large majority of the population drinks alcohol in moderation (two drinks or less per day) or not at all. Having more alcohol-free options and alcohol optional venues, I believe, will contribute to both more connected communities and safer neighborhoods where alcohol-related harms are reduced and neighbors feel safer enjoying their communities.

On a personal note, my spouse and I have lived in inner east Portland for over 25 years and have watched the increase in dangerous behavior in our neighborhood on weekend evenings. More intoxicated drivers, loud arguments, and property destruction has kept us inside our home after about 9:00 pm on Friday and Saturday nights, and cleaning up empty beverage containers and (sometimes) vomit or feces on our sidewalk or garden has become a burden on us and our neighbors. I hope that the effects of HB 3197 will be felt "downstream" in the form of increased safety in my own neighborhood.

Thank you once again for your work on this bill and your consideration for my views.

Sincerely,

Mark Douglass, LPC, CADC III, CGAC II