

In Support of HB 3197

Dear Co-Chair Prosanski and Kropf, and members of the Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response:

I urge you to support HB 3197 to increase revenue for the prevention and treatment of youth substance use. Taxing alcoholic beverages is furthermore a proven strategy to curb underage drinking. Not only does our state desperately need funds to address the lack of adolescent addiction treatment, but the measure would be a great stride towards stemming the addiction crisis in our state.

As Oregonians, we are rightly proud of our craft beverages and wines, which generate a lot of money for our state. However, we must also protect our youth, who are particularly vulnerable to harms from alcohol consumption. Our taxes on beer and wine are among the lowest in the country and our addiction rates are among the highest.

Much evidence shows that kids and young adults are particularly price sensitive and that one of the most effective ways to prevent underage drinking is to increase prices on beer, wine and cider. Both the CDC and SAMSHA recommend taxing those beverages to discourage underage drinking and thereby decrease the harms from alcohol.

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is a forum and knowledge hub for data, analysis and best practices in public policy. Their 2021 international assessment identified alcohol taxation and Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) as the two policies with the best return in investment, by a *very wide* margin.¹

As a community, Oregon needs to commit to preventing young people from using addictive substances until their brains are fully developed and they are no longer at risk for developing a substance use disorder. It is time Oregon prioritizes evidence-based practices that help to reduce substance abuse, and adding this taxation would be a huge step in the right direction!

As a parent who had to make the difficult decision to send my child out of state for treatment since none was available in Oregon, I beg you to prioritize adolescent treatment. Please furthermore adopt an approach that has been proven to help curb alcohol initiation. The only way we are going to get ahead of our addiction crisis is to prioritize primary prevention and delay the onset of substance use.

Thank you for your time, and please support HB 3197!

Lee Stewart, Portland

¹ OECD (2021), *Preventing Harmful Alcohol Use*, OECD Health Policy Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/6e4b4ffb-en>, p. 65.