

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

My name is Emily Cardwell, and I work at 4D Recovery, as an Outreach Worker. I urge you to support HB 3197 to increase revenue for the prevention and treatment of youth substance use.

At 4D Recovery, our mission is to provide—in partnership with systems, communities, and individuals—comprehensive services that help adolescents, young adults, and families recover from substance use disorders. Our vision is a future where systems, communities, and individuals work together to ensure that all people receive the support needed to find and sustain recovery from substances. HB 3197 is a crucial step toward making this vision a reality by ensuring that Oregon's youth have access to the necessary prevention and treatment services to support long-term recovery.

Oregon lacks adequate resources to address our alcohol and drug crisis, especially for youth—untreated substance use results in harm to individuals, families, communities, and businesses. Additionally:

- Most people who develop a substance use disorder begin using alcohol or drugs before the age of 18.
- In Oregon, youth are more likely than the national average to start drinking or using substances early in their lives.
- Oregon ranks among the worst states for youth access to addiction and mental health services.
- Schools, families, and communities are struggling to manage rising mental health needs, while waitlists for youth treatment programs are long or nonexistent in rural areas.
- Research shows that for every \$1 invested in prevention, up to \$10 is saved in healthcare, criminal justice, and lost productivity.
- Youth who get help early are less likely to experience homelessness, incarceration, or overdose later in life.

- The Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission is finalizing a Youth Strategic Plan that will have options for immediate and long-term strategic impacts to address the growing crisis.

I started off using at an early age, which included alcohol. I believe that if I would have been intervened on, it would have helped save me from the negative impacts. Growing up I didn't fully understand the consequences of my choices, and without guidance or support, my drinking escalated. Emotionally I wasn't capable of handling the struggles I faced on my own- I lacked the tools, maturity, and the self-awareness to recognize the harm I was doing to myself. Alcohol became a way to cope with emotions I didn't know how to process, and without intervention, I kept falling deeper into patterns that only made things worse. If someone had stepped in early- whether a mentor, family member, friend, or program- it could have given me the support and direction I needed to break free before the damage took hold.

As an outreach worker at 4D Recovery, I see firsthand the transformative impact of access to recovery support. By investing in prevention and treatment, we not only save lives but also build stronger, healthier communities where young people have the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Emily Cardwell