

Submitter: Brenda Essary

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3197

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

My name is Brenda Essary, and I work at 4D Recovery as a Peer Mentor. 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 am a person in recovery with over two years of sobriety, having struggled with substance use from a young age, including alcohol. Looking back, I believe that if I had access to the proper resources and support early on, I could have been guided down a better path. As a parent of young children, I am deeply concerned about the cycle of substance use that often continues through generations. I firmly believe that providing these resources to youth can help break this cycle. As a Certified Peer Mentor, I work closely with clients who, like me, started using alcohol at a young age. I witness firsthand the devastating consequences of underage drinking and how it continues to impact adulthood, from addiction to mental health struggles. Allocating funds toward adolescent prevention, treatment, and recovery services is crucial and would significantly help our youth and their families. In Oregon, there is little to no effort in preventing substance use among children, and these funds are a critical step in offering protection and support. Without adequate services, the reality of youth addiction, especially to alcohol, will continue to harm our communities for years to come.

As a Peer Mentor 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,  
Brenda Essary