

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

My name is Gabrielle Ward and I work at 4D Recovery as an Outreach Supervisor. 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 using drugs at just 12 years old. Trying to get sober at such a young age was harder than I could have ever imagined. At 16, a judge ordered me to my first treatment center. But when I got out, there was no ongoing support—no outpatient care, no peer support, nothing. Without that, I fell back into using for another six years.

During that time, I overdosed six times and cycled through five more inpatient treatment centers. By 19, I found myself in prison. Looking back, I can't help but wonder—if I had access to real support after treatment, could I have avoided some of the pain and hardship I went through?

As an Outreach Supervisor 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,

Gabrielle Ward