

Submitter: Erick Allen
On Behalf Of: Self
Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3197

****Written Testimony in Support of HB 3197****

****Submitted by:**** Erick Allen, Certified Substance Use and Mental Health Counselor (Oregon)

****Date:**** March 28th, 2025]

****To:**** Oregon Legislature Committee

****Subject:**** Strong Support for HB 3197 to Fund Critical Youth Services

Dear Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Erick Allen better know as “EA”; I am a Certified Substance Use and Mental Health Counselor with over 40 of lived experience, 10 years of which specializing in adolescent behavioral health and recovery. I currently provide direct clinical services as a contractor, often working 60+ hours per week to address the urgent needs of youth struggling with addiction, mental health crises, and systemic gaps in care. I urge you to ****pass HB 3197**** to allocate essential funding for youth services—a lifeline for Oregon’s most vulnerable populations.

**Why HB 3197 Matters**

1. ****Prevention Saves Lives and Costs****

- Early intervention for youth reduces long-term societal costs (e.g., healthcare, criminal justice) and prevents tragedies. Underfunded services force families into crisis-driven systems, exacerbating disparities.
- In my practice, I’ve seen how limited access to counseling, harm reduction programs, and housing supports perpetuates cycles of addiction and homelessness. HB 3197’s investments can break these cycles.

2. ****Oregon’s Youth Mental Health Emergency****

- The CDC’s 2023 data shows Oregon youth suicide rates remain alarmingly high, with substance use often co-occurring. Delayed care due to funding shortfalls puts lives at risk.
- Programs like school-based mental health services and peer support networks—which HB 3197 could expand—are proven to improve outcomes.

3. ****Workforce and Infrastructure Challenges****

- As a contractor, I witness how underfunded nonprofits and clinics strain to retain staff, leading to burnout and unmet need. HB 3197 would stabilize programs,

allowing providers like me to focus on care—not scarcity.

****A Call to Action****

HB 3197 aligns with Oregon’s values of equity and compassion. I implore you to:

- Prioritize funding for ****community-based youth services****, including trauma-informed care and substance use prevention.
- Support workforce development to address provider shortages in rural and underserved areas.
- Invest in ****culturally responsive programs**** for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth, who face disproportionate barriers.

As a frontline provider, I see daily the transformative power of well-resourced services. Passing HB 3197 isn’t just policy—it’s a moral imperative to save futures.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I’m available to provide further testimony or data upon request.

****Sincerely,****

EA

CADC-1 & QMHA-1

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